# THINKING IN PAINTING

## Gilles Deleuze and the Revolution from Representation to Abstraction

by

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# ABSTRACT

*The theory of thought is like painting: it needs that revolution which took art from representation to abstraction. This is the aim of a theory of thought without image.*

Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (1968a: 276)

Reading with Gilles Deleuze, this thesis explores art as a production that abandons representation as a formation of identity in favour of an ontology of becoming. I argue that the move to abstraction in painting resonates with the aim of "thought without image" because it counters representation with a radical materiality that returns painting to the movement of matter.

In order to situate Deleuze's thinking on art within a trajectory of a philosophy of becoming I open the thesis with a chapter on Bergson and Merleau-Ponty. Here I introduce the notion of 'thinking in painting' and argue that, while in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of art painting is a pedagogical investigation of the pre-human, chaotic and invisible 'depth' of a lived visible world, Deleuze takes Bergson's commitment to the possibility of moving beyond the human seriously and reverses the order of perception in order to seize the non-human virtual that eludes actualization. For Deleuze, the task of painting is therefore not to reveal the ontogenesis of the actual and the lived, but to extract the virtual and to embody it as a monument to that event.

In abstraction the interest moves from the mechanism of perception to the work of paint, and in the subsequent chapters on Mondrian, Pollock, Klee and Bacon I explore specific practices and their peculiar logic of sensation. In Mondrian we see the strange space of virtuality unleashed when the line is not constrained by the closure of the punctual system, and in Pollock's explosive "all-over" paintings identify that space not as a chaos but as a chaosmosis or machinic heterogeneity. I argue that by understanding these modulating and rhythmic compositions as haptic spaces, we break through the distancing of visibility and can begin to think at the level of expressive matter. I then turn to Klee, and using the famous image of "taking a walk with a line" explore the notion of the emergent figure in the context of Klee's aim to "render visible". What we find is an art where space and the form of expression works on the plane of composition and refers only to the unfolding rhythms of the abstract line. In the final chapter I discuss Bacon's portraits and look at how the multiplicity of the event that is maintained in the diagrammatic composition is drawn into the recognizable face. I conclude that the embodiment of the non-human event forces thought to confront the possibility of the emergent identity that is realized in the abstraction of "thinking in painting".

# INTRODUCTION

## Philosophy and Painting

# INTRODUCTION

> *The theory of thought is like painting: it needs that revolution which took art from representation to abstraction. This is the aim of thought without image.*
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> Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (1968a: 276)

## ***Deleuze and Painting***

In his conclusion to *Difference and Repetition* (1968a) Gilles Deleuze draws a parallel between the theory of thought and painting, and boldly declares that, "The theory of thought is like painting: it needs that revolution which took art from representation to abstraction. This is the aim of thought without image" (Deleuze 1968a: 276). That revolution is the subject of this thesis. I consider why one might think that abstraction in painting is "without image", and ask what that break with representation entails. I return to the specific work of painting and the spaces that it produces, and in taking up the challenge of "thinking in painting"—the title of this thesis—point to an ontology of painting that opens onto the question of a philosophy of expression.

For Deleuze, the affinity between philosophy and painting is precisely that possibility of thought that breaks through the constraints and conventions of representation, conventions which are dominated by a logic of identity that frames and subordinates thinking within a peculiarly human image or point of view; the perspective of the subject, the structure of given concepts, and the hierarchical and oppositional patterns of resemblance. In his attempt to extricate thinking from that model of thought, and "to 'do philosophy'" rather than to write history of philosophy, Deleuze aims to make philosophy a truly creative practice that takes thought beyond the narrow strictures

of human representation to "thought without image" (1968a, preface to the English edition pub. 1994: xv). He already sees that break with representation and image in painting. Painting is therefore an important reference with which to begin to understand Deleuze's quest "to 'do philosophy'", a point that is reflected in the many discussions on painting that occur in his own work, and in his writing with Félix Guattari (xv).

What is striking about Deleuze's work, and in particular that co-authored with Guattari, is its richness. *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980) is a cornucopia of the arts and of sciences as Deleuze and Guattari weave their way across music, literature, geology, physics, cinema, drama—and painting. As Brian Massumi eloquently puts it his translator's foreword to the 1998 edition, "This is a book that speaks of many things, of ticks and quilts and fuzzy substances and noology and political economy" (Deleuze and Guattari 1980: ix).

*What is Philosophy?* (1991) is equally eclectic because though the answer to the interrogative title is enigmatically simple—that "philosophy is the discipline that involves *creating* concepts"—philosophy as a creative discipline must not merely rethink or reformulate the old problems of philosophy and its concepts but make new concepts and open onto a new reality (1991: 5). It is then with invention in mind that Deleuze and Guattari examine the differences and affinities between philosophy and science, and philosophy and the arts, and their different forms of thought. They ask how these disciplines work creatively to form, invent and fabricate, and what philosophy might learn from other disciplines.[1]

[1] In a note to his translator's foreword of *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980) (English edition 1987) Brian Massumi writes, "Deleuze's books on the cinema (*Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* [1983], and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* [1985]) and on

The particular importance of painting for Deleuze is reflected in his many references to painters: sometimes they are comments in passing, sometimes sustained discussion. His key work on painting is the volume devoted to Bacon *Francis Bacon: Logique de la sensation* (1981a), and there are important references to Pollock and Rauschenburg in *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (1993a).[2] A concern with painting is also evident in the work co-authored with Guattari; a discussion on Turner in *Anti-Oedipus* (1972), references to Monet, Mondrian, Kandinsky and Pollock in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), and to Cézanne, Van Gogh and Klee in *What is Philosophy?* (1991) where a chapter entitled 'Percept, Affect and Concept' is specifically concerned with the intersection of art and philosophy (Deleuze and Guattari 1991: 163–199). These volumes, along with *Difference and Repetition* (1968a), are central to my own study; and in unravelling some of the complexities of Deleuze's philosophy, I take up his interest in painting and devote chapters to Mondrian, Pollock, Klee and to Bacon.

This is not to imply that the techniques of one discipline can or should be applied to another; indeed Deleuze and Guattari are adamant that each discipline has its own specificity. Rather, it means that by looking at one discipline—painting being my specific interest here—we can open up another, examine its habits and restrictions, steal its innovations and inventions, and take up the challenge to move beyond the determined structures of representation to the new and as

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painting (*Francis Bacon: Logique de la sensation* [1981a]) are not meant to be exercises in philosophical expansionism. Their project is not to bring these arts to philosophy, but to bring out the philosophy already in them" (Deleuze and Guattari 1980: 518 note 21).

[2] There is, as yet, no published English translation of *Francis Bacon: Logique de la sensation* (1981a).

yet unthought. By finding resonances between disciplines—abstract painting and philosophy for instance—we might provoke new patterns of thought and so move beyond the image of thought embedded in the history of philosophy in order "to 'do philosophy'", move to abstraction and to think the new.

My principal aim is therefore not to use painting to illuminate Deleuze's project, useful though that might be. Nor is it to provide an uncritical Deleuzian commentary on painting. My project is more ambitious: firstly, to use Deleuze's radical philosophy as a tool with which to look at the different ways in which painting problematizes the standard representational model of space and identity; and secondly, to explore the production of novel compositions and to suggest how they provoke the restaging of key philosophical problems of modernity by pushing thought beyond the human condition.

## *Philosophy and Art*

There is nothing new about philosophers studying art, and a long tradition of philosophy as a discipline that approaches that 'beyond' representational thought—the sublime in Kant or the unpresentable in Lyotard, for instance. Deleuze's own thinking on art comes out the Spinozist tradition, and in particular his reading of Bergson and of Merleau-Ponty.[3] It is thus situated within an alternative but major trajectory of twentieth century philosophy, and embraces that quest to think beyond the binaries of the Cartesian model of identity—which

[3] See: Deleuze's two books on Spinoza, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* (1968b) and *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (1981b), his work on Nietzsche *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (1962), and the two studies of Bergson, 'Bergson's Conception of difference' (1956) and *Bergsonism* (1966).

polarizes matter and mind—and the humanism of the Descartes–Kant tradition that has dominated western metaphysics. The question is: what do Bergson and Merleau-Ponty enable us to think and to do that the Descartes–Kant model does not?

In my first chapter 'Moving Beyond the Human', I put the Deleuzian project in context and turn to Bergson and to Merleau-Ponty. I examine the privilege that, in their different ways, they give to the artist's vision and working practices and why they think that art challenges the theory of thought, in order to understand Deleuze's project as a further development of the non-hylomorphic understanding of the image that emerges within the Spinozist tradition.

Deleuze works with a Spinozist concept of the body—here the painting—as a composition of relations. Remembering that Spinoza acknowledges the mind only as the idea of the body, "an idea which indicates the present constitution of the human body" (*Ethics*, Part IV, Prop.1, Scholium), he rejects a Cartesian duality of matter–mind in favour of a horizontal, relational model where the difference between one body and another is a function of its material and contextual specificity and not its representational relation to an *a priori* norm of standard.

Deleuze works with a similarly radical and materialist notion of the body as a horizontal composition. He describes it as a molecular, mobile and complex assemblage, and contrasts it to the molar body, which is organized in accordance with the normative rules of representational—social, political, artistic—discourses. This means that there is no exterior image or determination of representation as being, but that the body, or painting, works "without image" and is the expression of its material connections and the relations immanent to its genesis and composition—its becoming. This model makes it

possible to think about the painting at the level of its composition, and to say what it does and how it is affected by and affects other bodies in its relational network. In other words, to think within the particular ontology of painting—"thinking in painting".

As my analysis of the work of painting in Mondrian, Pollock, Klee and Bacon will demonstrate, in the move from abstraction to representation, painting already suggests the possibility of challenging the vertical model of representation and of working "without image". The problem that first needs addressing is how we might break through the representational distancing of visibility and begin to think at the level of composition and expressive matter in order to imagine new constitutions of the body and new ways of being. It is therefore in the context of an ontology of painting that I introduce the notion of "thinking in painting" and counter representation with an understanding of abstraction as a radical materiality that returns painting to the force and movement of matter.

Both Bergson and Merleau-Ponty give the example of art as a practice which, if it is an art of invention and therefore truly creative, defies the reference to the "image", and consequent predetermination, that representation requires, and turns to the problem of its material constitution—its genesis and composition. I therefore read them as philosophers who anticipate Deleuze because they understand that art, and painting in particular, has a specific task in that it abandons representation as a formation of identity, and as a peculiarly human perception, in favour of abstraction and an ontology of becoming. Thus I argue, painting goes beyond the constraints of opinion and appraisal, and the limitations of a centred construct of space–time to abstraction "without image" and a new order of painting. The special role that Bergson and Merleau-Ponty give to the art therefore echoes the Bergsonian "leap into ontology" which Deleuze then demands of

philosophy (Deleuze 1966: 57).

Bergson makes an implicit parallel between the artist and philosopher when he argues that the function of philosophy is to break the habits of thought, to go counter to the work of the intellect and to do violence to the mind (Bergson 1911: 30). He cites the artist as someone who already works against the limitations of the intellect and its representational systems and opens his important work of 1911, *Creative Evolution*, by using the example of the portrait to explain his theory of creative evolution as the production of the unexpected and the new. The finished portrait is explained by the features of the model, by the nature of the artist and by the colours spread out on the palette, but even with this knowledge no one, not even the artist, could have foreseen exactly what the portrait would be like, for to predict it would have been to produce it before it was produced—an absurd hypothesis which is its own refutation (1911: 6).

The production of the portrait exemplifies Bergson's theory of creative evolution as the realization of "that unforeseeable nothing [*imprévisible rien*] which is everything in a work of art" (1911: 341 [340]). It demonstrates the emergent process of the entirely novel and previously unthought as the progress of an internal impulse that creates itself as form (341).[4]

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[4] Bergson again uses the phrase "unforeseeable nothing" in his late essay 'The Possible and the Real' (1930) (Bergson 1930: 91). He talks about the "unforeseeable nothing which changes everything", and he parallels the "continuous creation of unforeseeable novelty which seems to be going on in the universe" with the work of art (91). He cites Rembrandt and Velasquez as artists of the unexpected and the original. His choice is interesting because they are artists much admired by Francis Bacon whose own originality I discuss in Chapter Six.

In the 'Eye and Mind' essay (1961) Merleau-Ponty already heralds that task and, like Bergson, accords a certain privilege to the artist's vision. With Cézanne in mind, he argues that "thinking in painting" opens up a pre-human vision that reveals the chaotic, amorphous and normally invisible world of light and colour that is the "virtually visible" [*un visible virtuel*] depth immanent to ordinary or profane vision, and he demonstrates how the "virtually visible" comes to visibility as an actual object (1961: 168 [32]). This insight prompts Merleau-Ponty to make the bold statement that "any theory of painting is a metaphysics" (1961: 177).

However, because the invisible is immanent to what is actual and visible, and therefore a "virtually visible", the metaphysics that is demanded is not one of transcendental ideas, but a "metaphysics of depth" (177). It is therefore a philosophical question of ontology, and not of identity and representation. Merleau-Ponty astutely notes that, while the painter might have a privileged vision that opens onto an ontology of painting—and that therefore he "thinks in painting"—the parallel move in philosophy is yet to come:

> Yet this philosophy still to be done is that which animates the painter—not when he expresses his opinions about the world but in that instant when his vision becomes gesture, when, in Cézanne's words, he "thinks in painting".[5]
> (1961: 178)

Given that Merleau-Ponty is an important influence on Deleuze, it is then not surprising that Deleuze ends *Difference and Repetition* with his own plea for philosophy to emulate painting, or that in his subsequent

[5] Merleau-Ponty references B. Dorival, *Paul Cézanne* (1948) for the phrase "thinks in painting" (1948: 101–3) (1961: 178 note 33)

work painting is a key reference, the names Cézanne and Klee being particularly prominent. As the title of this thesis *Thinking in Painting* indicates, the impetus for my own project is Merleau-Ponty's pointer to "this philosophy still to be done".

While, for Bergson, art demonstrates the activity of creation as a continuous becoming, and the unfolding of an immanent and potential manifold that he finds in biological and animate systems, for Merleau-Ponty painting has a privileged role in that it illuminates the processes of natural perception. So, while Merleau-Ponty associates this insight with a move to a pre-human vision, Bergson takes a more radical stance and suggests that it might take thought beyond the limitations of human intellectual and representational thinking. Deleuze rises to this challenge.

The key work here is the chapter 'Percept, Affect and Concept' in *What is Philosophy?* (1991) in which Deleuze and Guattari consider the art work as a monument that is not a commemoration or celebration of the actual and of lived experience—someone or something—but that is a body or state of affairs that captures and embodies the sensation that is expressed in the virtual chaos before or beyond human determination.

This argument centres on Deleuze's reading of the virtual–actual relation and on the possibility of the virtual becoming an entity that is distinct from the actual. In *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari identify this independent virtual as the Event [*Événement*] (Deleuze and Guattari's capitalization), an idea broached earlier in Deleuze's essay of 1956 on Bergson, in the two cinema books *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (1983) and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (1985), which also depend on a reading of Bergson, and in the work on acentred space in '1440: The Smooth and the Striated' in *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze and Guattari

1980: 474–500).

Art is important for Deleuze because, as he argues with Guattari in *What is Philosophy?*, the work of art seizes the virtual that eludes actualization and goes beyond the human to exist in itself as percept rather than perception, as affect instead of affection. It exists without image. Thus, in contradiction to Merleau-Ponty, Deleuze maintains that art moves in the opposite direction to perception and that the artist's aim is, not to expose the "virtually visible" or to show how the thing emerges in the transition from the virtual to the actual, but rather, to grasp and to extract the virtual, and in realizing the depth of visibility to "think[s] in painting":

> The aim of art is to wrest the percept from perceptions of objects and the states of a perceiving subject, to wrest the affect from affections as the transition from one state to another: to extract a bloc of sensations, a pure being of sensations. (Deleuze and Guattari 1991: 167)

This revolution in art from the actual to the virtual, and from representation to abstraction, is the focus of Chapter Two 'The Task of Painting'. Here I argue that Deleuze's move to an understanding of the virtual as Event (and therefore as a virtual that has become an entity), though nominally a reversal of Merleau-Ponty's position that the artist reveals the process of actualization and the move from virtual to actual, is in fact heralded by Merleau-Ponty's own observations about Cézanne's late painting and the work of colour.

The notion that art exists as a distinct reality demands that the concern of the theory of painting turn from the mechanistic and the technical to the problem of painting's own specificity and the reconfiguration of pictorial space that that entails. It is this concern

with what painting can do, rather than with what it means of represents, that then governs my reading of the work of Mondrian, Pollock, Klee and Bacon.

## ***Strange New Spaces in Painting***

### *Piet Mondrian*

It is in Mondrian's grids that we shall first encounter the abstract as a virtual space that defies the determination of representation, and its requirements of containment and completion. This is the subject of Chapter Three where I explore the move to abstraction as a revolution that upsets the habitual thought of the image as a fixed and measurable shape in space.

Here I engage with Clement Greenberg's assessment of Mondrian as the quintessential Modernist abstractionist, and dispute his view that Mondrian's grids conform to the rigours of punctual space—that they work on a two-dimensional flat plane where lines are straight and solid, and where colour lies flush with the canvas. I find that despite—and as I will argue, paradoxically, because of—the rigidity of the grids, the composition sets up a movement that produces vibrating lines and modulating spaces.

Despite the logic of the flat canvas, what we see are indeterminate and hyper-dimensional spaces that forestall the closure of the image that representation requires. Mondrian thus creates a hallucinatory virtual world of infinite movement where the two-dimensional surface is disrupted by lines that hover and weave, where colour is not contained, and where a different space—of unlimited and uncertain

depth—is played out.

Reading Mondrian after Deleuze leads me to conclude that this virtual topology conforms to Deleuze's definition of the Event in *What is Philosophy?* in which the Event [*Événement*] is defined as "real without being actual" and "indifferent to actualization (Deleuze 1991: 156 [147]). However, identifying the virtual spaces that I see in Mondrian's work as an Event prompts the question of how we are to think and, as Klee advised, to "render visible" these invisible forces without constricting that movement within the structure of representational space? How can one capture those modulating spaces? How can one actualize them as a state of affairs, in a body, on the canvas, while keeping hold of their vibrancy and infinite movement?

### *Jackson Pollock*

Whilst in Mondrian's grids we begin to discern the strange spaces of the virtual, in Pollock, whose work is the focus of Chapter Four, we can start to articulate the specific movement of that space. If one thinks about the dancing spaces of Mondrian's late work—*New York City* or the *Boogie Woogie* works—as an explosive noise of colour we might imagine one of Pollock's "all-over" canvases. However that explosion does not mean a catastrophe in the nihilistic sense, as chaos. Although it means disintegration, that destruction of space does not imply breakdown or confusion but rather a breakthrough to an alternative experience of space, a space that is not static or solid but becoming.[6] On these canvases, patterns emerge as lines dance across

[6] See: James Williams, 'Deleuze on J. M. W. Turner: Catastrophism in Philosophy?' in *Deleuze and Philosophy: the Difference Engineer* (Ansell Pearson

the canvas; colours accumulate and coagulate; and novel intersections are made as lines travel, connect and part. Pollock's lines follow a crazy dance. They weave and halt; they divide and join, grow into splodges, and fall back into wisps. Colours spin across the canvas, form calligraphic loops, and solid splats. There is an orgy of colour that, to borrow Deleuze's description of the Leibnizian event, moves like "luminous waves" (Deleuze 1993a: 77).

Clearly these busy, confusing "all-over" canvases defy the logic of representation, but is there a distinct logic of abstraction, or are Pollock's canvases chaotic? Do they perhaps carry the sensation that their evocative titles suggest—*Summertime (Number 9)* 1948, *Autumn Rhythm* 1950 or *Shadows* 1950? Using Guattari's analysis of "machinic heterogenesis", in *Chaosmosis: an ethico–aesthetic paradigm* (1992), I read the exuberant multiplicity of lines that explode over Pollock's canvases as a radiant multiplicity, a composed chaos which must be understood, after Bergson, as a ramified series that becomes more and more complex as its lines make new and unpredictable intersections, intersections that owe nothing to the formal and representational norms of the punctual system, and which usurp any definition of the line as having a beginning or end (Guattari 1992: 33–57).

These are compositions that are always already in the process of becoming but which, like the radiating grain of the sunflower head or nuclear decay, have a specific force, direction and arrangement, and a line of emergence that is abstract because it refers only to the internal pattern and rhythm of its vital and virtual topology. Like Rauschenberg, whom in *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (1993a)

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1997: 233–46). I return to Williams' reading of catastrophe as breakthrough rather than breakdown in my discussion of Pollock in Chapter Four.

Deleuze aligns with Pollock as an example of a painter who refuses the representational model of painting as a window on the world, Pollock creates surfaces that are a diagram or "an opaque grid of information" produced by its own inflective radiating action (1993a: 27). What becomes important is not what these marks mean—they do not represent 'summertime' or 'autumn rhythm'—but how they work, and the interest turns to the modulation of the canvas and the force of the composition. Like the parallel explosive dissolution of form in the move from solid states to the liquid and the gaseous, that new reality demands a different logic, and I turn to Klee in order to begin to articulate this fugitive thought.

### *Paul Klee*

In Chapter Five, I discuss Klee's famous "random walk" as a line of emergence, and use the motif of the journey—taking a walk with a line—to understand Klee's method of *Gestaltung* (an experimental, creative figuration) as a morphological production where the space of the image belongs only to the movement of its unfolding and elaboration (Klee 1956: 105). I go on to explore this abstract line as an extraordinary mobile line which works within its own smooth, indefinite and (*n–1*) dimensional space, and as such demonstrates the radical nature of Klee's exhortation to "render visible".

What we find in Klee are figures that are, in the terms of Bergson's essay of 1930 'The Possible and the Real' a "creative evolution" and "the continuous creation of unforeseeable novelty" because the form of the image is not predetermined within representational norms, and does not refer to a fixed point of origin or point of view, but belongs only to the smooth movement of its continuous becoming (Bergson

1930: 91).

Because there is no transcendent determination or *a priori* synthesis of the form the line might take, the process of emergence is an inflective movement or event. The line does not therefore reproduce the already visualised or visible but "renders visible" non-visible or invisible forces. The visual and material line therefore takes on a quite different function, no longer delineating a representation, but capturing the immaterial and energetic forces of the immanent movement of its own inflection. It therefore carries weight, intensity, and density and is identified by it direction, speed and the sensation—percept or affect—it produces. It is smiling, weeping or screaming, hurrying, meandering or convulsing. It is the weight of the peasant's sack in Millet, the thermal force of Cézanne's landscapes, or the drudgery of life captured by Van Gogh in his muddy shoes.

Like Pollock, Klee often gives his haunting images descriptive titles, such as *Sailboats in Gentle Motion* 1927 or *Crying Woman* [*Weinende Frau*] 1939, but these names do not denote resemblance in any formal sense. Any resemblance to things or figures works at the level of sensation, as for instance in the rocking motion or in the mournful pathos of Klee's walking line in *Crying Woman* 1939. As these examples indicate, abstraction as "without image" clearly does not necessarily mean non-figurative but instead demands that we think about the figure in new ways. Bacon does just that and, in Chapter Six, I turn to the radical revolution of the portrait as a figure of sensation.

## *Francis Bacon*

Deleuze has a special interest in the face. There is a chapter devoted

to faciality in *A Thousand Plateaus* called 'Year Zero: Faciality', and a sustained discussion of the face in *Cinema 1* (Deleuze and Guattari 1980: 167–91; Deleuze 1983: 87–95). In this work, Deleuze identifies two poles of the face: the face as a conceptual and social organization and the fleshy, non-signifying close-up. It is the tension between these poles that I see in Bacon. What is intriguing is that, despite the gross deformation of the face, Bacon's portraits capture an unmistakable but disturbing likeness These portraits are after all portraits of Bacon's friends and lovers—George Dyer, Henrietta Moreaes, David Sylvester—and, when compared to photographs, instantly recognizable. I examine Bacon's working practices, and conclude that it is precisely through the deformation and dissolution of the face that that resemblance is made.

Bacon's portraits do not evolve in the way that Klee's emergent images do as an elaboration of the inflective point. Bacon draws the contour of the face out of the suggestion of the chance intersections made in the chaotic splashes of colour and the haphazard marks of his preparatory work—when he literally throws paint onto the canvas. Instead of the easy Bergsonian creative evolution that I see in Klee's work, I suggest that Bacon's faces depend on a surging Deleuzian creative involution. This is because the deformation of the identifiable face dissolves that image into a modulating space where colours collide, and where the contour of the face exists only in the novel and violent intersections of planes of colour. This dissolution means that we see that face only *according to* the deformation of the human form and that Bacon therefore opens the face up to a curious acentred and asignifying nonhuman reality where resemblance is a matter of sensation.

Having discussed how Bacon's portraits work—their composition and genesis, the conditions under which they are made, and the new

sensations they produce—I then go on to suggest a typology with which to approach these strange new images and to develop a theory of thought that is like painting. In his own pedagogy of the image in *Cinema 1* and *Cinema 2*, Deleuze uses C. S. Peirce's classification of images in order to identify signs that correspond to specific cinematographic concepts. This is an analysis that is at least as useful when applied to painting, especially as Deleuze transposes Peirce's semiotics from a system of signification to a concern with territorialization and way that the material becomes expressive. This means that the sign—here the index, and in particular the affection-image—refers to artistic techniques and describes the material force of the painting, and therefore that it indicates the realization of the Figure as a signaletic composition, and painting as an art of expression.

Peirce's philosophy is a version of pragmatism that he calls "pragmaticism" because of his emphasis on experimental method, and practical meaning rather than truth (1940: 271, 259–60). Deleuze and Guattari also call their philosophy "pragmatics" (1980: 15). Like the pragmatic approach to philosophy, the pragmatic approach to painting is one of looking in fascination. It means to approach the image with the same experimental, revolutionary spirit with which Deleuze and Guattari come to philosophy in *A Thousand Plateaus*. It means asking questions, not about identity, but about the work of the image. Does it work? What affects and percepts does it produce? What new sensations does it make possible to feel? Does it make a difference? (Deleuze and Guattari 1980: xv).

## *Trajectories*

In their exploration of the power of colour and line—of paint—and what is proper to art the great painters of modern abstraction, like

# INTRODUCTION

Mondrian, Pollock and Klee move away from the figurative to abstraction in order to work with the pure elements of painting—colour and line. They produce fantastic paintings; canvases which vibrate and dance; catastrophes in colour; paintings which disturb the order and form of representation and force us to see, if we are looking, new hallucinatory spaces and new morphological images. This commotion is the very ungrounding of phenomenological perception. It is a revolution takes painting from a logic of representation to a logic of sensation; to the line that takes a walk, and the Figure that emerges from an abstract diagram of colour.

This move to abstraction demands an analysis of the very specific work of paint and the spaces and images that it produces. I begin that task with a chapter on Bergson and Merleau-Ponty in order to show how Deleuze radicalizes Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological ontology of perception—the production of visibility and the painterly task of making visible the invisible, or "virtually visible". I argue that the challenge of what Deleuze is doing accords with his commitment to Bergson's notion of creative evolution and the recognition that there is an indetermination in things which takes them beyond the human condition, and that this changes the task of painting from one of revelation to one of revolution.

The task of painting flips from a concern with the actual and the human to the more radical project of art standing up on its own, independent of the viewer or the artist, a project that takes painting beyond the limiting image of the human condition. This, I suggest is the great achievement of abstraction.

# CHAPTER 1

# MERLEAU-PONTY, BERGSON & DELEUZE

## Moving Beyond the Human

# MERLEAU-PONTY, BERGSON & DELEUZE

*Whether through words, colors, sounds, or stone, art is the language of sensations. Art does not have opinions.*

Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* (1991: 176)

## *The Work of Art*

For Deleuze art is one of the great forms of thinking—the other two being philosophy and science—and as such it has a very specific task. Deleuze does not look to art as an exemplar of the philosophical project but as a discipline that runs parallel to philosophy. Art has its own specificity; it is thinking through sensations—percepts and affects—rather than concepts. Nevertheless, art has an affinity with philosophy. Indeed, in his short introduction to the English edition of *Difference and Repetition* (French edition 1968a; English edition 1994) Deleuze goes so far as to claim that "Philosophy cannot be undertaken independently of science or art", and that philosophy forms its own concepts "only in relation to what it can grasp of scientific functions and artistic constructions" (1968a: xvi). That introduction was written in 1994, the same year as *What is Philosophy?*, co-authored with Guattari, was published in English, and only three years after the French publication of the latter, so drawing our attention to the common project of Deleuze's first and last attempts "to 'do philosophy'".

It is in the spirit of the challenge to philosophy to form its own concepts that I read Deleuze's critique of the image of thought in *Difference and Repetition.* In Chapter Three 'The Image of Thought', considered by Deleuze himself to be the "most necessary and the most concrete" chapter, Deleuze critiques "the classic image of thought" and proposes, "A new image of thought—or rather a liberation of thought from those images that imprison it" (1968a: xvi–xvii). Thus he

already signals the important movement of thought from pedagogy to ontology and the attempt "to 'do philosophy'". When Deleuze and Guattari turns to art and the pedagogy of the image in *What is Philsophy?*—its conditions, methods, principles and practices—the trajectory of their thought follows a similar pattern.[1] They try to grasp artistic constructions only to liberate them from the images that imprison them. Thus they put forward the revolutionary idea that the work of art must stand up alone independent of the viewer or creator, and exist beyond the human condition of lived experience: "The work of art is a being of sensation and nothing else: it exists in itself" (1991: 164).

That project is haunted by the work of Merleau-Ponty and his theory of perception, an analysis which culminates in the posthumous volume *The Visible and the Invisible* (1964), the first part of a new project that Merleau-Ponty had started work on two years before his death in 1961, and which is supplemented by 'Working Notes' that include many explanatory notes and ideas for the final structure of the proposed book. *The Visible and the Invisible* is complemented by the last piece that Merleau-Ponty saw published, the 'Eye and Mind' essay (1961). Both are pieces that give some prominence to the work of painting.

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[1] Thanks to Keith Ansell Pearson, who alerted me to *What is Philosophy?* as a *pedagogy of the concept,* and to Deleuze's work on the cinema as a concern with what he calls the *pedagogy of the image* (Ansell Pearson 2000).
See also the introduction to *What is Philosphy?* in which Deleuze and Guattari contrast the post-Kantian *encyclopedia* of the concept, where concept creation is attributed to a pure subjectivity, with a *pedagogy* of the concept, "which would have to analyze the conditions of creation as factors of always singular moments" (1991: 12).

In order to put Deleuze and Guattari's radical definition of the work of art as somehow beyond lived experience—independent of viewer or artist—in context, I therefore turn first to Merleau-Ponty and discuss the conditions of experience through his notion of the visible as a "wild being" with an invisible virtual depth. I go on to argue that Deleuze reworks Merleau-Ponty's idea of the virtual in the light of his commitment to the suggestion that Bergson makes in *Matter and Memory* (1896) that the last enterprise of philosophy might be a "leap into ontology", to seek experience at its source beyond the turn where it becomes properly human experience (Bergson 1896: 184). Bergson is thus my next concern. I look at his work on perception, and at his concept of the virtual, before tackling Deleuze's own "leap into ontology" and his innovative reworking of the virtual as an "Event" [*Événement*] beyond the human condition, and the consequent idea that the work of art exists "without image" as a being of sensation (1991: 156 [147]).

## *Merleau-Ponty and the Virtually Visible*

While Deleuze's theory of the concept is an inquiry into what it means to think, Merleau-Ponty asks the parallel question of perception; what does it mean to see?[2] *The Visible and the Invisible* begins with the

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[2] I am indebted to Diana Coole for her useful summary of Merleau-Ponty's work and the links that he makes between philosophy and painting, especially 'A Certain Red: Colour, Visibility and the Modulation of the World in Merleau-Ponty' (unpublished), a paper presented at the 'Painting and Philosophy' conference at the University of Warwick, May 1999. Thanks also to Éric Alliez. My reading of Merleau-Ponty, and of Deleuze, has been much influenced by the lecture course on painting and philosophy that he gave at the University of Warwick, Summer Term 1999.

words, "We see things themselves, the world is what we see …" (1964: 3). But, this bold statement is not an article of faith; we must learn to see. Thus Merleau-Ponty continues the task of philosophy as set out in his work of 1945 *Phenomenology of Perception* where he states that "True philosophy is to learn again to see the world" (1945: xx).

For Merleau-Ponty perception is not a facility of reflective thought but concerns the human body, a body that inhabits the world. Here Merleau-Ponty is anxious to return to the birth of meaning and, as Claude Lefont explains in his editor's foreword to *The Visible and the Invisible*, he calls for an examination of the condition of experience, and raises the question of a description of experience faithful to experience (1964: xxiii). Merleau-Ponty's work can thus be described as a phenomenological ontology.[3]

In his engagement with Kant, Husserl, Bergson and Satre, Merleau-Ponty challenges certain philosophical habits of thought—the subject–object distinction, essence and fact, notions of consciousness, image and thing, being and nothingness—as tools in philosophical reflection and objectification, and as the flattening of experience. He dismisses these approaches as translations of the human condition, and in *The Visible and the Invisible* announces a new philosophical project, a description and examination of experience that would not exteriorize and tame experience but that would work on the same level as experience. His phenomenology of perception is therefore a project that attempts to approach the human condition before its translation according to the concepts and language of science and philosophy, and to describe experience without recourse to the habits of thought.

[3] See: Claude Lefont's foreword to *The Visible and the Invisible* (Merleau-Ponty 1964: xi–xxxiii).

Merleau-Ponty thus hopes to reveal a pre-human, uncultivated, and normally inaccessible and invisible domain, and "to see the world".

By returning to the embodied body Merleau-Ponty proposes interrogation [*interrogation*] as the new method of philosophy, a method which in the 'Eye and Mind' essay he already recognises in a peculiarly painterly practice that reaches beyond the "visual givens" (1961: 166 [167]). In interrogation, the task of the philosopher is not the appropriation characteristic of habits of thought but to approach the object as a see-er with the open, even exclamatory, question, "What do I know?" [*Que sais-je?*] (1964: 128 and note 9). The philosopher thus interrogates the topography and production of the visible as an open system. The painter, similarly immersed in the visible, opens himself to the world and lives in fascination [*fascination*] (1961: 163, 167 [31]). On the canvas he recreates "a delirium which is vision itself" (166).

Working with the idea of the world as "the prolongation of my body" Merleau-Ponty develops a morphology of the visible that breaks with idealism and the idea of the sensible as distanced and opaque, and which proposes the sensible as "what there is" [*ce qu'il y a*] (1964: 57 [84]). He here supports the equation of body and matter that Bergson first makes in *Matter and Memory* (Bergson 1896: 20). He references Bergson's *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (a late work of 1932) and, paraphrasing Bergson, makes a parallel between his own concept of the body in the world and that of Bergson by declaring that "my body extends unto the stars" (1964: 57).[4]

[4] Bergson's own text reads: "For if our body is the matter upon which our consciousness applies itself, it is coextensive with our consciousness. It includes everything we perceive, it extends unto the stars" (Bergson 1932: 258).

Throughout *The Visible and the Invisible* Merleau-Ponty engages extensively with Bergson, referencing, in particular, *Matter and Memory* (1896) and *The Creative Mind* (1934). For instance, in Chapter Three of *The Visible and the Invisible*, 'Interrogation and Intuition', Merleau-Ponty raises the issue of proximity and refutes "two positivisms": he argues that Sartre flattens philosophy to the plane of ideality, and that Bergson flattens philosophy to the plane of existence with the idea of absolute fusion with the thing. For Merleau-Ponty both Sartre's negation and Bergson's proximity are positivisms because in their common notion of self-positing, or being-posited, they exclude horizontal thought and ignore the complexity of depth entailed in being in the world (1964: 127).

What Merleau-Ponty is anxious to do here is to get away from the positivist projection of the thing as a distanced and determined object of thought.[5] He absolutely rejects the idea of an irreconcilable distance between the "there is" [*il y a*] of the world in itself and the bodily subject that he finds in Sartre but he is careful to avoid the danger of an absolute proximity and fusion between body and being that he senses in Bergson. Immersion in the world is a complex intertwining, not coincidence but a coexistence in which the invisible depth of visibility is maintained. Thus when he states that "I am in the world and I am not it" Merleau-Ponty is proposing a subtle idea of proximity

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[5] Following Merleau-Ponty Deleuze tries to think against positivism by proposing the concept that is auto-poetic and self-positing; that is the concept that is created, in the Bergsonian sense, rather than given (Deleuze and Guattari 1991: 11).
Claire Colebrook offers a perceptive discussion of positivism from an analogue perspective in her recent article 'From Radical Representations to Corporeal Becomings' (Colebrook 2000).

through distance, hence his notion of intuition as "auscultation or palpation in depth" (1964: 127, 128). This position couldn't be put more bluntly than in his note of 1959 where he declares that,

> There is no intelligible world, *there is* [*il y a*] the sensible world .... The sensible is precisely that medium in which there can be *being* without it having to be posited; the silent persuasion of the sensible is being's unique way of manifesting itself without becoming positivity, without ceasing to be ambiguous and transcendent" (1964: 214 [266]).

With this in mind I understand Merleau-Ponty's late work as anti-phenomenological because he does not centre experience on the point of view of consciousness but on the body in the world:

> Idealism and the reflective camp disappear because the relation of knowledge is based on a "relation of being" [*«rapport d'être»*], because for me to be is not to remain in identity, it is to bear before myself the identifiable, *what there is* [*ce qu'il y a*], to which I add nothing but the tiny droplet "such as it is". (1964: xxi, 57 [83–84])[6]

In *The Visible and the Invisible*, the question that Merleau-Ponty asks

[6] In a similar critique of idealism, in *Difference and Repetition* (1968a) Deleuze rejects the ontology that equates Being with Identity, where an essential, true and invisible Being is pitted against a particular, opaque and sensuous visible. In this model, the cognizing and imagining seer is active in producing a sensible and perceptual synthesis, and the mind or the imagination is a sensitive plate contracting 'natural perception' from an invisible, atemporal and aspatial ideality (Deleuze 1968a: 70).

of the (anti-)phenemenology of perception is not what a thing is but "What is it that makes the visible a thing?" (1964: xl). It is a question of metaphysics, an ontological question about the structure and the being of the visible and its coming to expression in perception. With this approach, Merleau-Ponty aims not to translate what is seen into the order of thought, but to interrogate, or to see, what there is: "It is the things themselves, from the depths of their silence that it [philosophy] wishes to bring to expression" (4).

Here, Merleau-Ponty introduces that silent depth as the invisible but, reading *The Visible and the Invisible* alongside the 'Eye and Mind' essay (acknowledged by Lefort as a statement of ideas that Merleau-Ponty planned to develop in the second part of *The Visible and the Invisible*), I understand that invisible as a virtual that belongs to the sensible world of a pre-human domain. This is the virtual that is actualized as a thing within profane, human perception and the intelligible world of the visible.

Merleau-Ponty uses various phrases with which to describe this difficult concept: it is the "invisible inner framework" [*membrure*] operative within the visible; an "in-visible" that, in the working notes that form an appendix to *The Visible and the Invisible*, is described as "the secret counterpart of the visible"; it is that not ordinarily presentable [*Nichturpräsentierbar*]; the virtual focus of the visible; and, as described in the 'Eye and Mind' essay, the "virtually visible" [*visible virtuel*] (1964: 215; 1961: 168 [32]).

Hence, for Merleau-Ponty, the task of philosophy is not reflection, appropriation or translation—a relation of knowledge that requires the distancing of the thinking subject—but rather the interrogation and the expression of "*what there is*". In the light of his discussion in the

'Eye and Mind' essay of painting as a practice that unveils the mechanism of visibility, I understand interrogation as a parallel method to painting. By reversing the distancing that representation requires, interrogation demonstrates "the passage from the brute being to the acknowledged" (1964: 57). Painting opens onto a pictorial depth and similarly shatters the shell of external form, and returns to the pre-human obscurity of "*what there is*". Interrogation, like painting thus reveals the genesis of things in the move from the "virtually visible" to the actual.

With his notion of proximity as depth and, as it is developed in the 'Eye and Mind' essay, the "opened world such as it is in our life and for our body", Merleau-Ponty avoids the transcendence of the positing mind and ephemeral judgements (1961: 160). However, he still centres vision on the human—albeit the body rather than the mind—because he understands the return to, what he calls, "the soil of the sensible" as a return to a pre-human sensibility (160). The precise status of this pre-human is curiously ambiguous.

In order to avoid a dualism of mind–body, Merleau-Ponty insists on a durable yet invisible pre-human world that is always already there as the necessary counterpart to the visible human world. It is therefore an "ambiguous and transcendent" condition of the human, pre-human and therefore 'before' the human and yet somehow more rather than less than the human because it is an opened world "qua vision, pregnant with many visions besides my own" (1964: 214, 162). In view of the privilege that Merleau-Ponty gives to the painter and the painterly vision or fascination, and thus to the possibility of making the pre-human visible, it seems that his aim is to open up the human to the pregnant flesh of the world, and therefore to somehow expand the human in order to embrace what is normally invisible.

Merleau-Ponty's notion of vision in *The Visible and the Invisible* is a haptic one. I see *through* my immersion in the world, not by grasping or by the appropriation of a mind looking on, nor indeed by being coincidental with or merging with the world (my italics). This is an important point. Lived experience is not flat; to be swallowed up is as bad as grasping with forceps (1964: 124). As Merleau-Ponty puts it in *The Visible and the Invisible*:

> There is an experience of the visible thing as pre-existing my vision, but this experience is not a fusion, a coincidence: because my eyes which see, my hands which touch, can also be seen and touched, because, therefore, in this sense they see and touch the visible, the tangible, from within [*du dedans*], because our flesh lines and even envelops all the visible and tangible things with which nevertheless it is surrounded [*entourée*], the world and I are within one another, and there is no anteriority of the *percipere* to the *percipi*, there is simultaneity or even retardation. (Merleau-Ponty 1964: 123 [164])

Merleau-Ponty's observation here that there is "no anteriority" is key to understanding his notion of the virtual as the counterpart to the actual and the human. The "virtually visible" is not a ghostly prefiguration but persists in the divergent process of actualization.[7]

Thus for Merleau-Ponty, the "virtually visible" is a pre-critical, pre-objective, and even primordial world that has no means of expression of its own and must be brought into being and into the zone of human

[7] This point is taken up in a critique of Deleuze's notion of the virtual by Alain Badiou (1997: 48,9).

action. For Merleau-Ponty the task of the philosopher is then to bring what is unthinkable and invisible into expression; that is to bring the pre-human into the human and to actualize that virtuality. His aim is for philosophy to explore the ontogenesis of the inhabited human world and to show what it is that makes the visible a thing. The painter's privilege is a similar insight into a pre-human virtual that is normally obscured and reduced in the process of actualization and the creation of the thing.

### ***Merleau-Ponty and the Turn to Human Experience***

Merleau-Ponty's model of ontogenesis is horizontal in that it starts from the premise of the human subject, not as a mind, but as a body in the world. It is the body immersed [*immerger*] in the world that opens up the patterns, relations and equivalence through which the amorphous world of the "virtually visible" is made actual and meaningful, and therefore visible. But, meaning is only ever partial and provisional. The body sees, we might even say feels, the world from the perspective of its own location, interests and habits; creating meaningful patterns, figures and backgrounds, norm and deviations, a top and a bottom. As Merleau-Ponty recognises as early as *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), the body is postural. It creates, or incites, a style and signification:

> we shape in the manifold of things certain hollows, certain fissures—and we do this the moment we are alive—to bring into the world that which is strangest to it: a meaning, an incitement .... (1945: 61)

The body is the primary relation to the world, and thus assumes a

key creative role. In the 'Eye and Mind' essay Merleau-Ponty explains how the body is transcended by the "immanent visibility" or "virtually visible" which is functionally immanent to it as a "diagram" [*le diagramme*] of the actual (1961: 164 [24]). I see "according to it" (164).

The diagram is a concept that is important to Deleuze's analysis of painting, particularly his reading of Bacon's work, and is something that I return to in the next chapter and again in my own consideration of Bacon in Chapter Six. In Merleau-Ponty the notion of the diagram reinforces the horizontal relation of body–mind because it is set up as an imaginary that is "in my body" and is opposed to the notion of the "image" as an exterior design. Deleuze reworks the diagram through Bacon, and equates it with the independent "graph" of colour and marks that compromises Bacon's preparatory work, and which suggests the contour of the face. In Deleuze therefore, as in Merleau-Ponty, the diagram is suggestive of a certain reality, but whereas in Deleuze that reality is independent, in Merleau-Ponty it exists as an invisible but immanent visibility and is "a diagram of the life of the actual" (1961: 164).

The invisible is not a *de facto* invisible opacity nor an absolute visible but "the invisible *of* this world, that which inhabits this world, sustains it, and renders it visible, its own interior possibility, the Being of this being" (1964: 151). Like a phantom or ghost, it is the in-visible depth of the visible.[8] That depth—amorphous, transcendent and uncultivated "wild being", the being of the sensible—is the concern of the philosophy that Merleau-Ponty hints is yet to come.

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[8] See: Merleau-Ponty's note 'Visible–Invisible', May 1960 (Merleau-Ponty 1964: 246).

In his translator's preface Alphonso Lingis summarizes the status of the visible in Merleau-Ponty's text as:

> Not an assemblage of particulars each univocally occupying its *hic et nunc*, not a wandering troop of sensations nor a system constituted by ephemeral judgements, not a set of objects whose being is fixed in the norms for objectivity, the visible is a landscape, a topography yet to be explored, uncultivated being still, *wild being* still. (Merleau-Ponty 1964: xlvi)

Understanding the visible as a topographical depth leads Merleau-Ponty to consider that space as a model of being, and he contrasts this with the Euclidian model (1964: 210). Clearly where perception is an act that opens onto an amorphous, non-formal and transcendent world we cannot think of space independently of the indiscernibility of the "virtually visible", or as separate from the ontogenetic movement from that virtual to the actual.

Merleau-Ponty likens perception to the surgeon opening a body and seeing things "*in their activity*"; perception is not a perception of things, but a perception of elements or "*rays of the world*" (1964: 218 [italics follow the original text]). Space is thus a sustaining and nourishing voluminosity where lines are vectors and points are centres of forces; it is not a perspective, punctual positioning or a "network of straight lines" (195, 210). Interestingly the aesthetic world is likewise contrasted to Cartesian space, and seen as "a space of transcendence, a space of incompossibilities, of explosion, of dihiscence, and not as objective-immanent space" (216).[9] Perception as an action of actualization is, like

[9] This ties in with Deleuze's own work on smooth and the striated space, and with his reworking of Bergson's notion of duration, and the "potentially

painting, like every action, a cut across the amorphous and invisible world and is described by Merleau-Ponty as "a crystallization of time, a cipher of transcendence" and "a certain sampling of the Being of indivision" (208).

In the 'Eye and Mind' essay Merleau-Ponty talks about the painter interrogating with his gaze in order "to unveil" the means by which objects that have only visual existence—light, shadow, colour—enter profane vision and become "*this* thing" [*cette chose*]—*Montagne Sainte-Victoire* for example (1961: 166 [29]). What the painter is unveiling is the virtually visible, a virtual which he evokes as a phantom of the visible that has only visual existence, and which exists "at the threshold of profane vision" (1961: 166). Is perhaps the movement of actualization an action of veiling? And, if perception is a process of contraction that screens and isolates the rays of the world, how must we think about the plenitude of the invisible, a multiplicity that Merleau-Ponty recognizes as "qua visible, pregnant with many other visions besides my own" (1964: 123)?

Reading Merleau-Ponty after Bergson's *Matter and Memory* points to the daily experience of perception as the conversion of a "*present* image" [*image présente*] into an isolated "*represented* image" [*image représentée*] (1896: 36 [33]). Bergson boldly declares that "To perceive means to immobilize" by which he means that perception, because it is determined by the place of the body, is a measure of human action on things (208). Perception is thus understood as the consolidation of a movement from virtual to actual, and as the distinction of discontinuous objects, and as such as a dawning of and turn to human

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manifold" as a virtual multiplicity. I discuss the idea of the virtual as an explosion in Chapter Four, a chapter on Pollock's painting, and I consider the line as a vector in Chapter Five where I look at Klee's work.

experience (36).

This analysis fits with Bergson's considered understanding, in *Matter and Memory*, of the actual as a diminishing of the virtual:

> To obtain this conversion from the virtual to the actual, it would be necessary, not to throw more light on the object, but, on the contrary, to obscure some of its aspects, to diminish it by the greater part of itself, so that the remainder, instead of being encased in its surroundings as a *thing* [*une chose*], should detach itself from them as a *picture* [*un tableau*]. (1896: 36 [33])[10]

In a move that brings something beyond the human within human perception, we thus actualize the virtual and "taking a bias in the direction of our utility" make it a properly human experience (1896: 208).

However, by recognizing perception as a focused contraction and representation of the material universe, Bergson notes that "if you abolish my consciousness, the material universe subsists exactly as it was"; it resolves itself into the uninterrupted continuity of its own duration—a continuity that he conceives as a multiplicity, as "numberless vibrations ... all bound up with each other, and travelling in every direction like shivers through an immense body. (1896: 208) His conclusion is that in the act of perception we seize something that outruns perception itself (208). Thus he opens the way for the

[10] Here the French edition has a different sentence structure; the move from virtual to actual is described as "*elle* [*la virtuelle*] *passenait à l'acte*" (1896: 36 [33]). This vocabulary is echoed in Merleau-Ponty's notion of the emergence of the thing as "vision in act" (Merleau-Ponty 176).

distinction of a virtual that exists beyond the turn to human experience.

I shall come back to this point in a further consideration of Bergson's position below, but here note the suggestion of the virtual as a double openness. On the one hand the virtual is a pre-individual specific to a state of affairs or body and actualization as "*this* thing", and at the threshold or turn of human experience and profane vision (1961: 166; 1964: 132). On the other hand the virtual is a self-differentiating multiplicity that opens onto, what Deleuze would see as, the delirious smooth spaces and infinite movement of unimpeded refraction and the plane of immanence. In this case the virtual is a rather different virtual from Merleau-Ponty's "virtually visible"; it is instead the virtual that Deleuze identifies in *What is Philosophy?* It is a virtual that is distinct from the actual and that turns from human experience to exist in itself as an Event and a being of sensation.

This is the virtual that Deleuze finds in the work of art, and which is defined in *What is Philsophy?*, written with Guattari, as "an entity formed a plane of immanence" (Deleuze and Guattari 1991: 156). I identify a hint of that virtual in Merleau-Ponty's all too brief discussion of autogenesis at the end of the 'Eye and Mind' essay where he evokes Bergson's sinuous outline [*serpentement*] as a line with its own radiating movement and its own constituting power, and where he quotes from writer and artist Henri Michaux who in '*Adventures de lignes*' notes that "no one before Klee had 'let a line muse'" [*laissé rêver une ligne*] (Merleau-Ponty 1961: 183).[11] Merleau-Ponty does not follow up the

[11] Michaux is also taken up by Deleuze and Guattari who discuss Michaux in respect to perception, disorientation and the use of drugs. See: Deleuze and Guattari, '1730: Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal …' (1980: 283–87, 283

possibility of the autogenetic line himself, and how that line unfolds is the focus of my own work on Klee in Chapter Five. For the moment, I will stay with the notion of the virtual, and ask how we might grasp the virtual that is distinct from the actual.

To this end I now turn to Bergson and intuition as a method that pushes philosophy beyond the human condition to the nonhuman ontology that characterizes Deleuze's attempt "to 'do philosophy'". I propose that it is this nonhuman ontology, rather than the philosophy that unveils the pre-human, that the painter approaches when he "thinks in painting", and that ironically this possibility is already there in Merleau-Ponty's last writing (Merleau-Ponty 1961: 178).

### *Bergson: Beyond the Turn*

Bergson's work is also implicitly anti-phenomenological when in *Matter and Memory* (1896) he proposes that philosophy should abandon its futile attempts to analyse and to explain experience, and instead seek "experience at its source":

> But there is a last enterprise that might be undertaken. It would be to seek experience at its source, or rather above that decisive *turn* where, taking a bias in the direction of our utility, it becomes properly *human* experience. (Bergson 1896: 184)

Bergson goes on to acknowledge the difficulty of giving up certain habits of thought, even of certain habits of perceiving. Nevertheless,

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note 70). Examples of Michaux's calligraphic Indian Ink drawings are given in Michaux 1998.

his later work on intuition as a method of philosophy, as developed in *Creative Evolution* (1911), surely achieves more than just what he sees as the negative part of the work. The method of intuition is an innovation that shows that intellectual moulds and habits are inadequate to understanding life and its continuity but this not necessarily imply that proximity flattens philosophy to the plane of existence, as Merleau-Ponty supposes (1964: 127). Positively conceived, intuition takes philosophy above or before the human condition and so frees thought from the image, and requires philosophy to consider the question of becoming.

As Bergson explains it in *Matter and Memory*, in the passage quoted above, intuition approaches "experience at its source" by taking a leap beyond the screen of interested, biased perception, which, by turning the virtual towards actualization, isolates and immobilizes the virtual and "extracts from the whole that is real a part that is virtual" (Bergson 1896: 193, 248).[12] It is therefore not a question of broadening human-experience, as Merleau-Ponty's method of interrogation suggests, but of going beyond the human condition, in the sense that Nietzsche's *Übermensch* rises above the limitations of the human.

The contrast between intellectual thinking and intuition demonstrates the implication that this move away from centred

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12 In *Matter and Memory* Bergson explains perception in terms of light. In perception we reflect back to surfaces the light that emanates from them, light which without the screen of the body would have passed unopposed and which would therefore never be revealed. Images therefore appear to turn toward our body and it is only that aspect that interests our body that is reflected (1896: 36, 37).

thinking has for the way we might think about space, and the consequent resonance with the task of painting.

### ***Bergson: Space and Unorganized Bodies***

Bergson proposes intuition as a method of philosophy that challenges the bias of the intellect towards the needs of human interest and action. In *Creative Evolution* Bergson defines the intellect as "the faculty of relating one point in space to another, one material object to another; it applies to all things but remains outside them" (175). He argues that intellectual habits of mind are an adaptation to the conditions of human existence:

> Hence should result this consequence that our intellect, in the narrow sense of the word, is intended to secure the perfect fitting of our body to its environment, to represent the relations of external things among themselves—in short to think matter (1911: ix).

In this restrictive model of thinking, a detached intelligence is turned towards matter and ignores the processes of life where to exist means maturation, change and creative evolution. Thinking matter is to treat things as if they were inert, to think mechanically, to be concerned with physical operations and fabrication, and to think of matter as indifferent to its form. Matter is thus spatialized as if it were a homogeneous medium that can be divided and assembled, as in Euclidian space, where "The whole of matter is made to appear to our thought as an immense piece of cloth in which we can cut out what we will and sew it together as we please" (156).

In Chapter Two of *Creative Evolution* Bergson polarises intelligence and instinct (intuition being instinct that has become "disinterested, self-conscious, capable of reflecting upon its object and of enlarging it indefinitely") for the purposes of definition, but he is most insistent that they are like two interpenetrating tendencies, opposite and complementary and that crucially "intuition may enable us to grasp what it is that intelligence fails to give us, *and indicates a means of supplementing it*" [my emphasis] (1911: 176, 177). We must therefore think of intuition as a method that produces a movement of thought.

Intuition, understood as the inverse of intelligence, breaks down the subject–object barrier, since it is defined not by distance but "by a kind of sympathy" and immediate knowledge (176).[13] What is interesting here, in the light of Merleau-Ponty's subsequent privileging of art in terms of touch and fascination, is that for Bergson intuition is likewise proved by the existence in man of an aesthetic faculty and witnessed by the creativity of the artist.

Bergson cites the artist as someone who already perceives "by a kind of sympathy" [*une espèce de sympathie*] what he calls the "intention of life", that is that things endure in their own way and that they have continuity and, we might say, depth and he calls for a philosophical inquiry "turned in the same direction of art" (1911: 177 [178], 176). Intuition is therefore a method that is both negative and positive

13 "Sympathy" carries the weight of the break down of the barrier between the subject and object, or artist and model, that both Merleau-Ponty and Bergson find in art practice. Bergson (1911: 192–93), Merleau-Ponty (1961: 187) and Deleuze (1968a: 165) all use the analogy of swimming to describe this mode of being in touch with reality—fascination/interrogation or intuition—explaining that you do not learn to swim by following rules but that you must 'go swim'.

because it both challenges habits of conceptual intellectual thought and produces a new way of thinking, a mode of thought explained in *The Creative Mind* as a method that follows the life and reality of things, their inward movement and their duration (1934: 190–92). I therefore think that Bergson, and intuition as a method of philosophy, goes further than Merleau-Ponty's notion of interrogation. While the later involves creation as an activism or operationalism that reveals the virtually visible, intuition is more radical because it struggles with a model of the virtual that actualizes itself, so eluding the intelligible appraisal that characterizes the turn to the human (as in Merleau-Ponty's model). That virtual emerges in a body that is not organized within the frame of representational thought and human experience.

In *Creative Evolution*, in a section headed 'Unorganized Bodies', Bergson introduces his notion of duration [*la durée*] as "the stuff of reality" (272). He illustrates duration with the example of the dissolving sugar-lump and famously observes that the wait for sugar mixed in a glass of water to melt is experienced as a time lived, and not as a mathematical time. (1911: 9–10). It is, he says, "no longer something *thought* [*du pensé*], it is something *lived* [*du vécu*]", and he uses this example to demonstrate that that process of the sugar's melting is an abstraction, and that therefore things have their own manner of sensible being, their own rhythm and movement (10 [10]).

Things—the sugar lump for instance—endure in their own way and have their own pattern of duration but, while that movement appears to be an isolable system, the peculiar duration of the thing (and he distinguishes the "thing" and the "being" from the thought "object") is lived only in relation to my own duration; as for example, when I watch the sugar dissolve (1911: 15). My intuition of relative duration reveals a being of the sensible inferior or superior to my own duration

and, because it is immediate datum and a being with its own vital movement and its own space, demonstrates a mode of existence beyond my human experience.

As the everyday example of the sugar lump shows, Bergson equates duration with change as well as with endurance, and indeed he goes on to show that duration means "invention, the creation of forms, the continual elaboration of the absolutely new" (1911: 11). He understands that development as an evolutionary process of unfolding in which the past persists in the present, like the change of form in the continuous progress of embryonic life—or Klee's autogenetic "walk with a line" (18–19). The interest for the philosopher thus centres on becoming and the patterns of change, rather than on being and identity.

As Deleuze notes in *Bergsonism* (1966), in *Time and Free Will* (1889) Bergson ties the experience of movement to consciousness, and thus makes duration a psychological experience (Deleuze 1966: 48). However in *Creative Evolution* (1911), and with the simple example of the sugar lump, Bergson demonstrates that movement belongs to things and that things must endure in their own way.

With this model of creative evolution, Bergson recognises life as an "impulsion or an impetus [*élan*]" that creates form for itself, and which, admitting the unforeseeable, recognizes the indetermination of matter (1911: 258 [259]). Bergson regards the inclination of life to creative evolution as "an immensity of potential" [*une immensité de virtualité*], a "potential manifold" [*virtuellement multiple*] that, under the certain conditions of its contact with matter, is spatialized as individual and

specific tendencies (258 [259]).[14] Individuation is thus understood as "the work of matter", and reality as a "perpetual becoming" [*le devenir radical*] (258, 272 [273]).

This curious movement of emergence is already understood by Bergson when in *Creative Evolution* (1911), and in a criticism of Kant, he condemns space understood as a mould or a ready made in favour of duration and the movement of "springing forth", the point being that emergence is not teleological but a the continuity of always becoming (361). It is this movement of creation that Bergson sees in art.

As Bergson sees it the art work is not projected as 'out there' but comes to fruition through an experimental process which depends not on the regularity of the intellect but the conscious engagement the artist and the sympathy with the object which he identifies as intuition (1911: 176). He argues that by presenting the object within the closed system of solid forms the intellect limits thought: it denies and forgets the creative process and fixes the object in space rather than seeing space emerge with the object. Contrasting the intellectual model and "normal perception" with aesthetic intuition, Bergson privileges the artist as someone whom, in the invention of the "unforeseeable nothing", works against the mechanism of representation and the limitation of intellectual moulds (177, 341). What becomes apparent is that, instead of the object being fixed in space as an static objectified form, the object creates its own form in duration, and appears as what Bergson calls the "congealment of a movement" (239).

Bergson's point is that not everything—art and life for instance—works within the radical mechanism of the intellect and the scientific

[14] Bergson explains the manifold/multiple as "unity that is multiple and a multiplicity that is one" (1911: 258).

and representational habits that distinguish and separate distinct elements in the flow of experience. He argues that such an intellectual approach means that space is regulated and prefigured according to the requirements of a representational or closed system—it is an organized, isolable body. Such mechanism requires predictability and depends on preconceived constructed forms through which matter is shaped and objectified.

In contrast to mechanistic, thought the artistic image is the result of the process of creation—painting or carving—work which in *Creative Evolution* Bergson, echoing Klee, describes in terms of emergence and growth as "sprouting and flowering" and like the ripening of an idea which changes as it is taking form (1911: 340–41). The notion of the emergent object points to a radical reconfiguration of space as a product of movement and change. Instead of the object being projected in a determined space it evolves in the 'depth' or duration of its own creation—it is an unorganized body.

In *Bergsonism* (1966) Deleuze emphasises the Bergsonian relationship between ontological duration and the question of space:

> If things endure, or if there is duration in things, the question of space will need to be reassessed on new foundations. For space will no longer be a form of exteriority, a sort of screen that denatures duration, an impurity that comes to disturb the pure, a relative that is opposed to the absolute: Space itself will need to be based in things, in relations between things and between durations, to belong itself to the absolute, to have its own 'purity'. (1966: 49)

It is such a reconfiguration of space that I identify in the work of painters who, like Mondrian, Pollock, Klee and Bacon, produce strange, novel and abstract spaces, but the privilege of the artist in that reassessment of space is already there in Bergson's use of the work of art as an example of creative evolution.

The close parallel between the task of philosophy and the task of painting is evident in the resonance between Bergson's discussion of intuition and the way that Bacon talks about painting. In his interviews with David Sylvester (1962–74), Bacon talks frequently about working at the level of instinct and intuition as a method that is anti-illustrational, and sees his own work as painting that works directly on the nervous system rather than through the intelligence (Sylvester 1975: 56).[15] He makes no reference to Bergson but the coincidence of vocabulary is interesting. Bacon explains that he wants a thing to be as factual as possible and at the same time to unlock areas of sensation:

> Isn't it that one wants a thing to be as factual as possible and at the same time to be deeply suggestive or deeply unlocking areas of sensation other than simple illustration of the object that you set out to do? Isn't that what art is all about? (Sylvester 1975: 56)

## *Deleuze and the Virtual as Event*

While Merleau-Ponty announces a "philosophy yet to be done" that is not limited by human opinion, and Bergson recognizes "a last enterprise" that goes beyond human experience, their respective

[15] These interviews are the standard reference for Bacon. Deleuze makes extensive use of them in *Francis Bacon: Logique de la sensation* (1981a).

methods of interrogation and intuition do not necessarily lead to a common understanding of what going beyond the human condition might mean.

As I explained above, although Merleau-Ponty uses Bergson's model of matter–body, and the immersion in and consequent intuition of the world that implies, he suggests interrogation as a method by which human perception might open onto a pre-human domain, a space that is, from the point of view of profane or normal vision, in-visible. Thus for Merleau-Ponty, the task of philosophy is to unveil [*dévoiler*] the "virtually visible" depth of the human condition (1961: 166 [31]).

Deleuze, however, has a more radical reading of Bergson's argument for intuition as a method of approaching experience *before* the human. He understands Bergson as approaching a nonhuman ontology. This reading then prompts Deleuze and Guattari, in *What is Philosophy?*, to suggest that the task of philosophy is to identify the virtual that exists in itself as an Event that is distinct from the actual and the human, and thus to discover a completely different and nonhuman reality (1991: 156).

In his 1956 essay 'Bergson's Conception of Difference' Deleuze reconfigures Bergson's notion of the "potentially manifold" as virtual multiplicity (1911: 258). Here Deleuze points out that it is not the states of things that differ in nature but their tendencies, and he uses Bergson's concept of duration to demonstrate how things endure in their own way as an expression of a certain tendency. Following Bergson's definition of the "potentially manifold" as a non-numerical immensity—"a mutual encroachment of thousands and thousands of tendencies which nevertheless are "thousands and thousands" only

when once regarded as outside of each other, that is, when spatialized"—Deleuze has a very particular understanding of multiplicity as undifferentiated (1911: 258). With this definition in mind, Deleuze is able to develop the notion of a virtual multiplicity.

This virtual is not the amorphous and chaotic "virtually visible"—the "indecisive mumur of colors"—that is known only retrospectively through the turn to actualization, that Merleau-Ponty describes in the 'Eye and Mind' essay (1961: 172). Deleuze's virtual is a reality distinct from the actual, and exists as a multiplicity of inseparable variations and the infinite movement of self-differentiation. This is a very different approach to indetermination and chaos.

In *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari distance philosophy from traditional science, which they gloss as a discipline that, like the mechanism of profane perception as theorized in Merleau-Ponty's late work, "*passes from chaotic virtuality to the states of affairs and bodies that actualize it*" (1991: 155–56). With references both to Prigogine and Stenger's work *Entre le temps et l'éternité* (1988) and to James Gleik's book *Chaos: Making a New Science* (1988), they distinguish philosophy and science by their different approaches to chaos (Deleuze and Guattari 1991: 118, 156). They define chaos after the 'new' science of Prigogine and Stengers, not as disorder, but as a complex virtual:

> It is a void that is not a nothingness but a *virtual*, containing all possible particles and drawing out all possible forms, which spring up only to disappear immediately, without consistency or reference, without consequence. (118)

According to Deleuze and Guattari, the object of science is to construct functions (which are "presented as propositions in discursive systems") with which to reflect on and communicate an understanding of chaos, and therefore to "gain *a reference able to actualize the virtual*" (1991: 118). Science works like a freeze-frame, immobilizing the infinite movement of virtual multiplicity and ordering chaos. This is not, however, to suppose a mechanical, ordered actual system but to begin to deal with chaos, and in that sense this model of science echoes Merleau-Ponty's aspiration to unveil the invisible.

In contrast to science, philosophy as understood by Deleuze and Guattari, and with Bergson in mind, aims to grasp chaos as a virtual multiplicity by "giving the virtual a consistency specific to it" (1991: 118). As Deleuze and Guattari see it, the problem of philosophy is framed around the problem of creating consistent concepts without losing the infinite movement of the virtual multiplicity. The problem is "to acquire a consistency without losing the infinite into which thought plunges" (42). To this end, instead of working on a plane of reference like science, philosophy institutes a plane of consistency, otherwise called a plane of immanence, that works like a sieve and sections chaos without halting its infinite movement. Instead of referencing and imposing order on chaos, the philosophical approach brings out the 'order' that is already there.

By thinking of intuition as "the envelopment of infinite movements of thought that constantly pass through a plane of immanence", Deleuze and Guattari support Bergson's notion of intuition as a philosophical method that overcomes the representational distancing that a plane of reference institutes (1991: 40). They contrast intuition with the intension, or determination, of scientific methods and the

scientific insistence on a plane of reference around which the order of chaos is structured.

This model of philosophy is cashed out in Deleuze and Guattari's development of the Event [*Événement*] as explained in Chapter Six of *What is Philosophy?*, and in their subsequent discussion of art as a discipline that struggles with chaos but which, instead of confronting it with references that limit—as science does—retains its infinite variability within a composed chaos or chaosmos. Hence the difference, noted by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*, between Klee's evocation for art to "render visible", and the scientific demand to reference the move from virtual to actual—to render or reproduce the visible (1980: 342).

In a key passage in *What is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari ask what would happen if we reversed the logic of science, and instead of following the process of actualization from chaos to state of affairs—the move virtual to actual—we go in the opposite direction, from actual to virtual. This is not the same trajectory at all but a move that converges on a quite different virtual to the chaotic virtual. When we go from the actual to the virtual we encounter the virtual that has already become consistent on the open, indeterminate and desert-like plane of immanence that envelops and sections the infinite movement of chaos (1991: 36). This is what Deleuze and Guattari call the Event [*Événement*] (156 [147]).

The Event is distinct from the actual because it keeps the infinite movement to which it gives consistency, and therefore eludes its own actualization. However, this does not mean that the Event is an extraordinary 'happening', far from it. Deleuze's Event is an entity that captures the infinite movement immanent to the very ordinary impetus

of life. It is not a question of an event being the actualization of a potential, but of an entity that embraces the self-differentiating movement of what Bergson calls "potentially manifold", and which Deleuze reads as "virtual multiplicity". The reality of the Event does not depend on actualization—and having a human reference—but has a distinct reality as a composite becoming of a virtuality that consists of hetreogeneous, simultaneous components: "variations, modulations, intermezzi, singularities of a new infinite order" (1991: 156–58).[16]

If, as Deleuze and Guattari suggest in *What is Philosophy?*, we take seriously this idea of the virtual as an entity that remains indifferent to actualization, we are committed to seize that virtual as an Event (Deleuze and Guattari 1991: 156). Their aspiration for philosophy is for philosophy to "become worthy of the event", an aim that requires that we turn toward the virtual (1991: 160). It is precisely that move that Deleuze and Guattari identify as the work of art, where the aim is for art to exist in itself, as a composition independent of the viewer or the creator—"a compound of percepts and affects" that is a bloc of sensations that has a reality in the absence of human perception and affection (1991: 164).

[16] This concept of the Event is disputed by Alain Badiou who in *Deleuze: The Clamor of the Being* (1997) argues against Deleuze's thinking of the Event as a virtual multiplicity, a concept that finds the virtual continuous with the actual and therefore unexceptional. Working through set theory and a notion of multiplicity as an actual, functional and closed set, Badiou develops a theory of the Event as an extraordinary interruption that 'in faith' takes the subject outside the normal order of being. His examples include Paul's conversion at Damascus, and the French Revolution 1789. Far from being extraordinary the Deleuzian Event is the secret part to actualization (Deleuze 1991: 156).

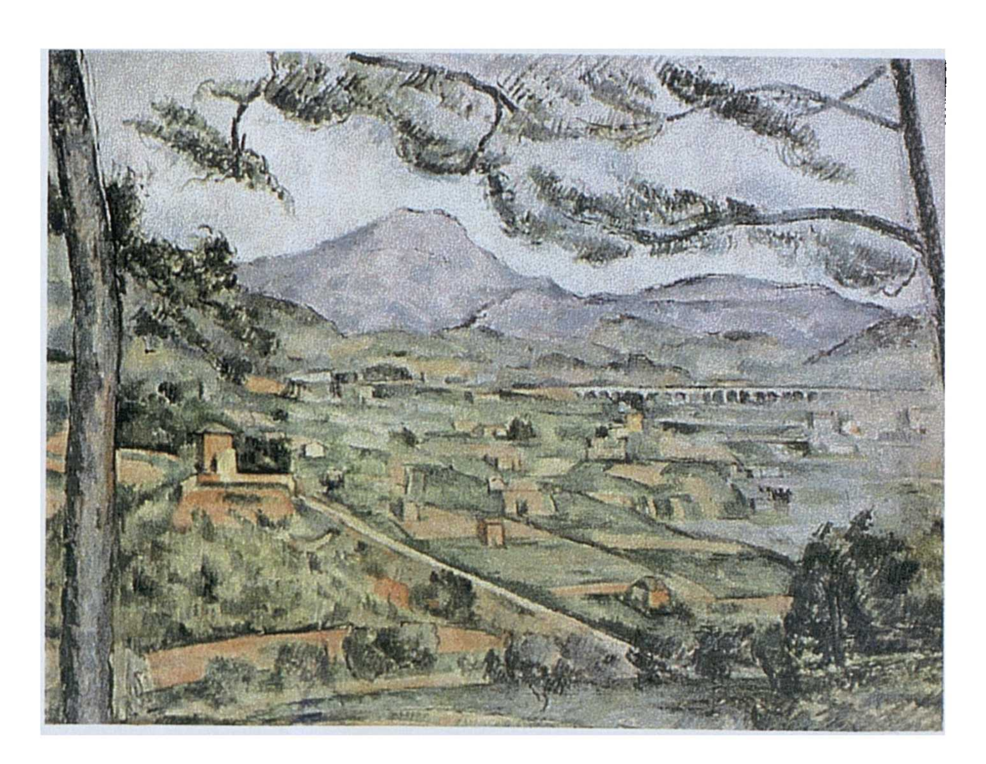
Reading Deleuze and Guattari after Bergson's *Matter and Memory* (1896), I understand this turn as a demand to give up the habits of thought and of perception that mark human experience and to go beyond that turn. Bergson likens this task to the mathematician determining a function from the differential, where beyond the infinitely small elements that we perceive of the real curve is "the curve itself stretching out into the darkness behind them" (1896: 185).

Quite what that darkness would look like, and how it works as a virtual that is real without being actual, are questions that motivate my own study of how painting works. This is addressed in the detailed discussion of the work of Mondrian, Klee, Pollock and Bacon that comprises the main part of this thesis where I tease out a logic of sensation beyond the human condition. First, however, it is necessary to spell out the peculiar task of painting as a project that resonates with the task of philosophy. To do that I return to Merleau-Ponty and his discussion of painting—especially to the work of Cézanne—in the 'Eye and Mind' essay (1961).

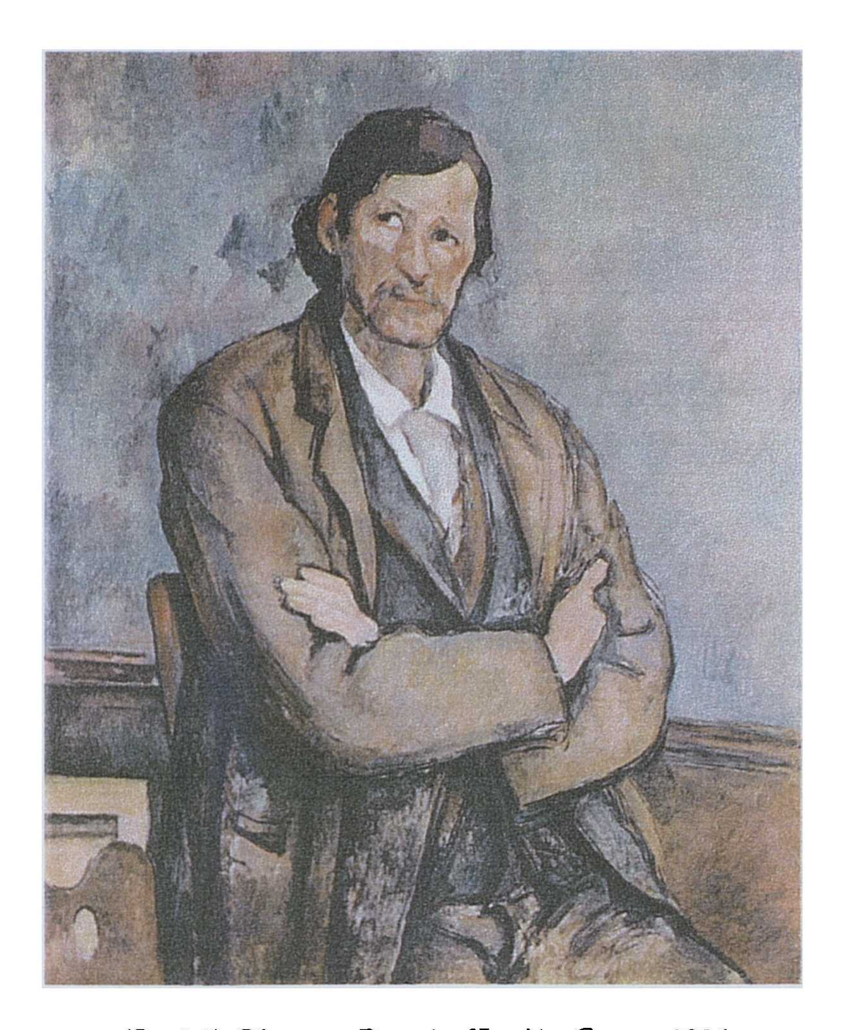
# CHAPTER 2

## CÉZANNE

The Task of Painting



(fig. 2.1) Cézanne, *Montagne Sainte-Victoire* 1885–87



(fig. 2.2) Cézanne, *Portrait of Joachim Gasquet* 1896



(fig. 2.3) Cézanne, *Montagne Sainte-Victoire* 1904–6

# CÉZANNE

> *Is it not the genius of Cézanne, to have given over all the means of painting to this task: making visible the force of the fold of the mountains, the force of germination in the apple, the thermal force of the landscape ... etc?*
>
> Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: Logique de la sensation* (1981a: 39)

## *A Science of the Sensible*

Merleau-Ponty gives a very specific task to what he calls the "secret science" of painting: it is to render visible what in ordinary or profane vision is invisible and to expose the "diagram" [*le diagramme*] according to which actual visibility is produced (1961: 161, 164 [24]). He observes that in profane vision we do not notice light, shadows, reflections, colour; indeed, "To see the object it is necessary *not* to see the play of shadows and light around it" (167). However it is precisely that "virtually visible" [*visible virtuel*] configuration of light, lighting, shadows, reflections and colour that premises the object, or thing and, as an example of this obscuration, cites Rembrandt's portrait of the captain in *The Night Watch* to show how the pictorial image depends on the shadow (168, 167).

The shadow is the "virtually visible" that haunts perception and which, "like ghosts" or like "the phantoms captive in it", is pre-critical, primordial and pre-human (1961: 166, 167). What Merleau-Ponty demands of art, and of painting in particular, is that it must return to this secret and dormant depth of vision, reveal the invisible, and show how this "deeper opening on things" works to support human, corporeal visibility (172). He therefore declares that, "Any theory of painting is a metaphysics"; it is, however, a metaphysics of depth (171, 177).

In *Difference and Repetition* (1968a), Deleuze implicitly engages with Merleau-Ponty and points up a possible dissension to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology. Referencing *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), he objects that even though Merleau-Ponty's projection of a primordial level of the visible is a projection of an *Ur-doxa*, it is still tied to the model of recognition because it "remains no less prisoner of the form of *doxa*" (Deleuze 1968a: 137 and note 6). Deleuze argues that, by identifying the invisible as an *Ur-doxa*, Merleau-Ponty ties the ghost of visibility to the mechanism of recognition and 'common-sense', and which makes the sensible an object of thought. However, while Deleuze's objection holds for Merleau-Ponty's early phenomenological work, his later work complicates the status of visibility, and takes a decidedly anti-phenomenological turn, with an understanding of the in-visible being precisely that, *in*-visible.

In the light of Merleau-Ponty's commitment to the work of art as an opening onto the in-visible, he would surely agree when Deleuze argues that "The work of art abandons the domain of representation in order to become 'experience', transcendental empiricism or science of the sensible", and that in dealing with what can only be sensed, the issue of aesthetics becomes the very being *of* the sensible (1968a: 56–57). Merleau-Ponty might want to add that, that science, as a science of the encounter and of interrogation, is also a science of the (in)sensible—and the (im)perceptible.

What makes the visible a thing is not its insertion into a locus of space, but the articulation of an amorphous invisible murmur of colours. Alphonso Lingis understands this when, in his translator's introduction to *The Visible and the Invisible*, he talks about the sensible thing being not *in* space but "like a direction" being at work *across* space (Merleau-Ponty 1964: xlviii). The unity of the thing is not a

"cluster of particles" but a "certain manner of being" [*Wesen* (vb.)], and best understood as the complex composition of a "constellation[s]" rather than as a collection (1964: 115; 1961: 167). What is important to note here is the double articulation of content and expression that this configuration of being implies, a point developed by Deleuze and Guattari in the plateau 'The Geology of Morals' in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980: 39–45).

As a manner of being the visible is borne by and of a certain style—the luminosity of colour, the rhythms of shadows, the animation of a latent and pregnant depth—which is its invisible support. This causes Merleau-Ponty to explain the thing as "a concretion of visibility", and Bergson to see the lines drawn by the artist as a "congealment of movement" (Merleau-Ponty 1964: 132, Bergson 1911: 239). In either case the visible is understood in terms of depth and has a dimensionality and geology.[1] That geology does not define the identity of the thing but indexes the thing as a punctuation in the baroque proliferation and modulation of the depth of the visible.

As we saw above, in *The Visible and the Invisible* Merleau-Ponty stresses that the invisible transcends the body as the in-visible, and that the consequent task of philosophy is interrogation. The corresponding task of painting is to see from the point of view of immersion [*immerger*]. Merleau-Ponty takes up this challenge in 'Eye and Mind' with the idea that the painter "opens himself to the world" approaching what he sees by looking (1961: 162). "The painter", says

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[1] See: Merleau-Ponty's 'Working Notes' (June 1, 1960) where he opposes a 'philosophy of history'—such as that of Sartre—not to a 'philosophy of geography' but to a 'philosophy of structure' and a 'transcendental geology' (1964: 259).

Merleau-Ponty, "lives in fascination [*la fascination*]", interrogating not appropriating, seeing the object in the delirium of vision and unveiling the phantastic constellations of the in-visible (167 [31]). The painter's question of light, lighting, shadows … is the phenomenological open question:

> The painter's gaze asks them what they do to suddenly cause something to be and to be *this* thing [*cette chose*], what they do to compose this worldly talisman and to make us see the visible. (166 [29])

What is particularly interesting here is the radical pre-individuality of the invisible constellation, where each thing, each mountain or each face, is supported by a sensible but invisible composition peculiar to *this* mountain, *this* face, "*this* thing". On the canvas, we see the ontogenesis of the visible and the birth of order. We see exactly what Merleau-Ponty demands of painting—the unveiling of the move from virtual to actual—but, because the pre-individual depth of the "virtually visible" is approached by the gaze and not by appropriative thought, it cannot be thought of as a space of exteriority. In fact, the thing has only visual existence—hence the privilege that Merleau-Ponty gives to the painter (1961: 166).

The 'experience' of the work of art—Deleuze's "science of the sensible"—is not flat but, being supported by a "virtually visible" constellation of colour, shadow … "this thing" has depth but is not in space. It therefore demands a very different conception of space. Merleau-Ponty describes this space as "this internal animation, this radiation of the visible" and argues that space and content must be sought "*as* together" (180). Here then is the demand for an ontology of painting that can deal with the invisible. Merleau-Ponty articulates this

argument by turning to painting—to Cézanne.

### *Merleau-Ponty and Gasquet's Cézanne*

Merleau-Ponty's reading of Cézanne is very close to Joachim Gasquet's literary memoir *Cézanne* (1921). Merleau-Ponty certainly read Gasquet and surely knew other widely available witness accounts of Cézanne.[2] However, in the 'Eye and Mind' essay Merleau-Ponty references more recent work on Cézanne: Dorival (1948) and Novotny (1938), both of whom would have had access to Gasquet's account. But, despite making no direct reference to Gasquet, Merleau-Ponty's account of Cézanne in the 'Eye and Mind' essay (1961) echoes Gasquet's vocabulary and his exuberant enthusiasm for Cézanne's painting.

The quotes attributed to Cézanne in this debate are not therefore strictly the words of Cézanne but of Gasquet's Cézanne. Gasquet's memoir of conversations with Cézanne, published fifteen years after Cézanne's death in 1906, are a florid and passionate homage, but the reader is assured by Gasquet that they are a "faithful memory", even a transcription, and that he has invented nothing.

> Round these imaginary conversations, out of a hundred others that I really had with him in the country, in the Louvre or at his studio, I have put together everything I was able to collect and everything I can remember of his ideas about painting: this was the way he talked and, as I believe, thought. (1921: 146)

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[2] See: Merleau-Ponty 1945: 318. Witness accounts of Cézanne include: Bernard (1904), Denis (1907) and Vollard (1914), and Fry (1927).

Merleau-Ponty takes up Gasquet's memory of Cézanne, and similarly focuses on two important concepts: geology and colour. According to Gasquet's Cézanne, it is a commitment to geology and to depth that distinguishes the work of the artist from that of the draughtsman. With the thought that painting is very much an optical affair, Cézanne returns to the logic of the eyes and drawing. The first task of the artist is to "bath in experience" (the coincidence with Merleau-Ponty's idea of the see-er immersed in the visible is surely not accidental) and to draw the anatomical framework of the picture, the earthly aspect (Gasquet 1921: 180–82; Merleau-Ponty 1961: 162). This skeleton, like the "diagram" or "invisible inner framework (*membrure*)" in Merleau-Ponty, is that according to which we see (1961: 164; 1964: 215).[3] It is the underpainting, the *grisaille*, or what Cézanne calls, after Lucretius, the "geology of the landscape" (Merleau-Ponty 1961, 164; Merleau-Ponty 1964: 215; Gasquet 1921: 182).

Cézanne is quite explicit in distinguishing drawing and art from draughtsmanship. Drawing is not to paint the mindful imaginings of pre-formed mythologies or ready-made ideas of objects—a tree, a face, a dog (Gasquet 1921: 169). That is the job of the draughtsman. The artist draws the invisible support of the visible and, as Merleau-Ponty explains, brings to expression the specificity "*this* thing"—for example Cézanne's *Montagne Sainte-Victoire* 1885–87 (fig. 2.1)—from that diagram (1966: 161). In order to explain the importance of the geology of the thing Cézanne cites the underpainting used by Paolo Veronese. Underpainting is a geological construction of planes and, literally, an invisible support that penetrates and gives depth to the vibrant undulation of the colour, which here is the overpainting. Regretfully,

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[3] In *Francis Bacon: Logique de la sensation* (1981a) Deleuze introduces a different vocabulary. He uses the French "*charpente*" for framework, and translates "graph" (as used by Bacon) as "*le diagramme*" (1981a: 73, 65).

says Cézanne, the importance of the "surrounding penetration" of geology is lost in the work of draughtsmen, say Ingres, Holbein or Clouet, all of whom Cézanne disparages as having "nothing but line", and he mourns the fact that, "We've lost this knowledge of preparations, this freedom and vigour gained from the underpainting. To model—no, to modulate. We need to modulate ..." (Gasquet 1921: 178, 182).

The importance of this preparation—"the measurement of the earth"— becomes clear when, having laid down a framework, Cézanne turns his eye from the earth to the cosmos and to colour: "an airy coloured logic suddenly ousting sombre, stubborn geometry. Everything becomes organized: trees, fields, houses. I am seeing. In patches of colour" (Gasquet 1921: 154). Cézanne clothes the delicate framework of the earth in colour, saturating it in light. Because the underpainting is a grey [*grisaille*] fragile structure and not a hard outline, the colours interpenetrate and flow, making subtle and delicate points of contact, and creating volumes that circulate and turn. Colours are expression and content, and breathe life into the drawing: "as soon as life breathes into it, and it is dealing with sensations, it becomes coloured" (166).

It is the fullness of colour that produces sensation (166). The artist speaks in colours, colours that are dense but fluid. This is what Cézanne means when he extols the painter to modulation; the play of colour that puts the measured but trembling earth (the framework) into variation and which transforms the grey underpainting with the fullness of planes of colour: "Planes in colour, planes! The coloured place where the heart of the plane is fused, where prismatic warmth is created, the encounter of planes in sunlight." (167).

### «*Sensation colorante*»

The problematic of the force of colour, and the equation of colour and sensation in Gasquet's Cézanne, marks a radical shift in the way that Merleau-Ponty thinks about the ontogenesis of the visible. Instead of focusing on the role of the painter in unveiling the move from the "virtually visible" to the actual, he turns to consider the autogenesis of the visible. He also, and most tellingly moves from a general consideration of painting to talk about Cézanne's late work, notably the watercolours.

Cézanne's late paintings, like *Portrait of Joachim Gasquet* 1896 (fig. 2.2) or *Montagne Sainte-Victoire* 1904–6 (fig. 2.3), are characterized by distinct patches of colour and the white spaces between the colours; something that Merleau-Ponty recognizes in a quote from Georges Schmidt's commentary on Cézanne's watercolours, where he talks about there being "a flowing movement of planes of colour which overlap, which advance and retreat" (1961: 181). In this work concrete outlines do not emerge through the immobilization and organization of colour, or on the definition of a framework. Instead of unveiling "vision in act", here Cézanne captures the sensible activity of modulation and "renders visible" the virtual hesitancy of the mountain or face (Merleau-Ponty 1961: 176).

We see this animation in *Portrait of Joachim Gasquet* 1896 (fig 1.2), with its smile and its pinks, and where the patches of colour do not conjoin into distinct planes or clothe a drawn geology or bone structure, but turn to the cosmos of the blank canvas and resume, what Merleau-Ponty calls "this internal animation, this radiation of the visible" that the painter seeks in the name of colour (depth and space) (1961: 183). Or consider *Montagne Sainte-Victoire* 1904–6 (fig. 2.3), the

watercolour or the supposedly unfinished oil, where there are vast cosmic chasms between the patches of colour and where the voluminosity and clear outlines that we see in the tight planes of the middle period is elusive.

The modulating images of Cézanne's late work surely achieve just what Deleuze and Guattari demand of the work of art; they elude actualization. Far from constructing a lived and visible 'human' image—an actualization and perception of *Montagne Sainte-Victoire* or of Joachim Gasquet—from the conjunction of planes of colour, the image stays forever modulating and it is only that infinite movement that gives it consistency. The tenuous contour of the mountain or face is lifted from the earth and, opening onto the cosmos, the patterns of colour produce uncertain, provisional and sinuous 'contours' that are lines of sensation. The smile exists as it never was; a smile that exists only in the brightness of colour, a line made in the relation of pink and green.

Merleau-Ponty picks up on the radicality of Cézanne's late painting in the 'Eye and Mind' essay, and finally understands art as auto-generative. He notes that in Cézanne's late watercolours, planes of colour overlap, advance and retreat, and that "space radiates around planes that cannot be assigned to any place at all" (1961: 181). As in Klee who sets up a polyphonic depth by layering transparent colours (something that I will discuss in Chapter Five), in Cézanne colour is not fixed, concreted or actualized but is a flowing movement which produces the rhythms and textures of 'life—of sensation. Merleau-Ponty is quick to distinguish this "dimension of colour" from colour that describes nature; this is colour that "creates identities":

> The question [rather] concerns the dimension of color,

> that dimension which creates identities, differences, a texture, a materiality, a something—creates them from itself, for itself .... (1961: 181)

In these paintings, "a something"—*Montagne Sainte-Victoire* 1904–6 (fig. 2.3)—is not the ordered actualization that references an invisible and chaotic virtual, but an entity that retains the radiating depth of its internal animation and the self-differentiating movement of the fullness of colour; the same animation that is crucial to Deleuze and Guattari's definition of the Event [*Événement*] as an entity that has "gained or kept the infinite movement to which it gives consistency" (1991: 156 [147]).

Again it is Gasquet who sees what is crucial in Cézanne: the work of colour as sensation—affect and percept. He terms the force of colour "colouring sensation" [*sensation colorante*][4] Cézanne already understood the specific task of painting when, dismissing drawing as a "bastard logic, falling somewhere between arithmetic, geometry and colour", he discovered that the way to a full rendering or translation of the sun, a tree, a rock, a dog ... is colour: "Colour, if I may say so is biological. Colour is alive, and colour alone makes things come alive" (Gasquet 1921: 162). For Cézanne painting is about character and life, about moist flesh with its muscles, rich tones, and blood, and not limited to the formulaic design of the draughtsman, which is perfect

[4] "Colouring sensation" is Daniel Smith's translation into English of Deleuze's "*sensation colorante*" (Deleuze 1981a: 7, 73; Smith 1996: 46). An alternative "Colour sensation" is Christopher Pemberton's English translation of *Joschim Gasquet's Cézanne* (Gasquet 1921). Both are adequate translations, the point being that colour is understood as a force, the colouring/colour sensation, and not as sensation that is coloured.

and idealized.

It is interesting that Cézanne turns to the 'old masters', and in particular to Velázquez, to explain his passion for colour—luminous, warm, Mediterranean colour—because, as I note in Chapter Six, Bacon too was a great admirer of Velázquez, and reworks Velázquez' *Pope Innocent X* 1650 in his own studies after Velázquez and in paintings like *Head VI* 1949 (fig. 6.4) and *Pope* 1954. Cézanne admires Delacroix and luminous colour, not the bloodless Ingres (according to Gasquet, Cézanne ridiculed *La Source* 1856 [*The Spring*] but admired Ingres' portraits and liked *L'Age d'or* 1862 [*The Golden Age*]. He also liked the Venetians, especially Tintoretto (whom, in *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, Deleuze lists among Baroque painters), and the Spaniards notably Velázquez (Deleuze 1993: 29–30). Painters of character. Warm-blooded painters. Painters who make the sap flow, who touch 'life'. The painter, Cézanne says, must have an allegiance to a certain "logic of colour" and work with colour as "colouring sensation" (Gasquet 1921: 161).

The work of colour is explored by Merleau-Ponty in both the 'Eye and Mind' essay, and in *The Visible and the Invisible* where he theorizes the logic of colour as a logic of differentiation, and it is the self-generative power of this logic that causes him to privilege colour over line (1964: 212). Colour works by differentiation; the perception of red, for example, is made by seeing it in relation to other colours, and that configuration gives the colour a certain vibrancy (red on green looks different to red on brown) and throws up boundaries and contours specific to that singular configuration. In this case the line or contour of the figure would emerge only from the intersections of modulating colour and accord to the logic of colour as "colouring sensation". It is in this sense that Merleau-Ponty talks about the

peculiar way that things seem to offer themselves to the see-er and the sense that "the vision we acquire of them seems to come from them" (131).

In the chapter entitled 'The Intertwining—The Chiasm' Merleau-Ponty frames the problematic of the visible and the invisible, and the self-emanation of the visible, with a rhetorical question about the work of colour and the peculiar way that colour "imposes my vision upon me":

> What is this talisman of colour, this singular virtue of the visible that makes it, held at the end of the gaze, nonetheless much more than a correlative of my vision, such that it imposes my vision upon me as a continuation of its own sovereign existence? (1964: 131)

He uses the example of "a certain red" explaining that red is not a *quale* (an essential property) but "a variant in *another dimension* of variation" (my italics) (131). It is caught up in a web of relations and finds consistency only within that constellation, a constellation called variously—within the space of one page—as; a "certain differentiation", an "ephemeral modulation", a "node", a "concretion of visibility", a "punctuation in the field of red", and a "momentary crystallization" (132). This profusion of terms can only point to the subtle double openness of the visible that is at once intertwining and chiasm. The key point here is that colour is not a thing or attribute but a virtual focus in the palpable movement of ontogenesis. A "certain red" is a fossil, its focus bound up in a chaotic participation, what Merleau-Ponty calls its "atmospheric existence" and "woolly, metallic or pourous [?] configurations" [the punctuation is Merleau-Ponty's own] (132).

What emerges in the movement of colour is, as Gasquet had already pointed out, not the prosaic line [*signalement*] of the fixed contour (space-envelope) or the natural colour (colour-envelope) of the objectified representational image, but the constituting or generating line and the rhythmic pattern of the mist rising, the quiver of the smile, eyes that look, a mouth that speaks—the animation of the face in Cézanne's *Portrait of Joachim Gasquet* 1896 (fig. 2.2), or the thermal force of the landscape in *Montagne Sainte Victoire* 1904–6 (fig. 2.3) (Merleau-Ponty 1961: 183; Gasquet 1921: 223).

With the influence of Gasquet and this notion of "colouring sensation" in mind, Merleau-Ponty's reworking of the contour at the end of the 'Eye and Mind' essay becomes essential to the demand for the painter "render visible", and marks a radical shift away from representation. It is, as Merleau-Ponty admits a matter of "freeing the line" (1961: 183). Here the contour does not circumscribe the thing, as the "prosaic line" does. Merleau-Ponty describes such lines as,

> indicated, implicated and imperiously demanded by the thing, but they themselves are not things. They [the lines] were supposed to circumscribe the apple or meadow, but the apple or meadow 'form themselves' from themselves, and come into the visible as if they had come from a pre-spatial world behind the scenes. (1961: 183)

Thus far from ruling out lines in painting, as perhaps Impressionism does, the line is freed from the point and becomes a "generating axis" that, like Klee's musing line "renders visible" rather than, as Deleuze and Guattari point out "render or reproduce the visible" (Merleau-Ponty 1961: 183, Deleuze and Guattari 1980: 342).

## *Deleuze and the Art of Sensation*

The task of making visible the invisible is, for Merleau-Ponty, the force of seeing and of painting [*à force de voir, à force de peindre*] (1961: 161 note 2). But, for Deleuze, the exposé of the invisible is not enough; art must not just unveil the "virtually visible" but extract it. To this end Deleuze reverses the order of visibility—from virtual to actual—supposed in Merleau-Ponty's anti-phenomenology of art, in order to seize the virtual that eludes actualization—something that I think is achieved in Cézanne late painting. This virtual has a distinct, secret and unlivable existence as pure percept; Deleuze understands it as an Event (1991: 156, 175). Deleuze thus takes Merleau-Ponty's evocation of the ghost or phantom that has only visual existence seriously, but what he identifies in art is not the liberation of the phantom and its restoration in the ontogenesis of the actual and human image of profane vision, but the artist making art stand on its own as pure being of sensation and a monument to the Event (Merleau-Ponty 1961: 166–67, Deleuze and Guattari 1991: 169). The force of painting is then, not making the invisible visible but, in a move from the actual to the virtual, raising perceptions to the percept and making art stand on its own as "a bloc of sensations" (1991: 164).

This is an important move. As we have seen, for Merleau-Ponty the virtual world is the "amorphous" phantastic invisible world of quality, light, colour and depth: the pre-human world unveiled by the artist. However, Merleau-Ponty identifies three different phases of Cézanne's painting; the first is representational, in the second he is unveils the pre-human, and in the last he captures a virtual animation. It is this third period which points to Deleuze's argument that the artist might extract a curiously nonhuman reality. In *Phenomenology of Perception* 1945, Merleau-Ponty (here with a reference to Novotny) notes that Cézanne

first tried to paint expression, but later realized that expression is produced in the sensible configuration of the thing (1945: 322). This, he says, is why Cézanne's paintings are "those of a pre-world in which as yet no men existed"(1945: 322). The third and most revolutionary phase of Cézanne's work is the late work—for example *Portrait of Joachim Gasquet* 1896 (fig. 2.2) or *Montagne Sainte Victoire* 1904–6 (fig. 2.3)—in which the virtual reality is captured without it being stabilized as an actual object and brought into human and profane visibility, and where its constellation and modulation is kept in play.

The virtual that Deleuze and Guattari identifies in *What is Philosophy?* is just such a virtual. It is not a chaotic virtual that finds a restricted consistency as an actual and human composition, but a virtual that has become consistent without ever being lived, because it is realized as an Event in the material of painting (1991: 165). This consistent virtual is real without being actual, the phantom of the visible has cut its bond with perception, and the work of art stands up by itself and works to its own logic of sensation. The painting does not actualize the virtual but embodies it, so that, instead of being an experience 'as lived', it is given 'a life' and, escaping representation, becomes experience (Deleuze and Guattari 1991: 177; Deleuze 1968a: 56–57). This is why, as Keith Ansell Pearson notes in his article 'Pure Reserve: Deleuze and the Nonpsychological Life of Spirit' (2000), while both Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze talk about painting in terms of becoming, Merleau-Ponty says that "any theory of painting is a metaphysics" but, for Deleuze, painting is a virtual materialism, and its theorization an ontology of the Event as an entity (Ansell Pearson 2000: 2).

Cézanne longs to catch hold of and preserve that surge of sensation that Deleuze and Guattari identify as the Event, and which I equate

with Gasquet's description of the force of life as "this aspiration of the earth towards the sun, this exhalation from the depths towards love" (Gasquet 1921: 154). The problem for art is to capture this force. Gasquet has Cézanne admit that "It would take a genius to immobilize this upward surge in a moment of equilibrium, and yet suggest its thrust. I'd like to catch hold of this idea, this burst of emotion, this vapour of life hovering over the universal fire .... To paint that minute in its precise reality!" (154). To would be to make the virtual consistent; and this is precisely the task that Deleuze and Guattari assign to painting when they open their discussion of art in *What is Philosophy?* with the bold but enigmatic statement; "Art preserves" (Deleuze and Guattari 1991: 163). What is preserved? The smile, the blood throbbing under the skin, the wind shaking a branch ... the animation of the face, the pulse, turbulence ... the "colouring sensation": "What is preserved—the thing or the work of art—is *a bloc of sensations, that is to say, a compound of percepts and affects*" (164).

"Colouring sensation" is a pivotal concept in Deleuze's logic of sensation [*logique de la sensation*] and though *Francis Bacon: Logique de la sensation* (1981a) is, as the title suggests, an exposition of Bacon's work, Cézanne, another great colourist, pervades the volume. In the light of Merleau-Ponty's homage to Cézanne, and because of my own understanding of Deleuze and Guattari's insistence of the work of art as a being of sensation as a radical reversal of the movement from virtual to actual in Merleau-Ponty's ontogenesis of the visible, it is important now to tease out the work of "colouring sensation", a phrase that in Deleuze is always specified by quotation marks as «*sensation colorante*». This analysis of "colouring sensation" then leads me to consider Deleuze's understanding of sensation as "nonhuman becomings of man", a refinement of Bergson's commitment to the move beyond or before the human condition "of man" (Deleuze and

Guattari 1991: 169). I then turn to a short discussion of Deleuze's reworking of concept of the diagram as a construct that paradoxically sustains and releases "colouring sensation" before moving on, in subsequent chapters, to look at the work of colour and line in paintings by Mondrian, Pollock, Klee and Bacon.

Deleuze recognizes that Cézanne's innovation is to understand that sensation is created in the vital patterns and rhythms of the colour on the canvas. It is not an ephemeral quality (as in Impressionism) but the material force of paint, a rhythm that runs through the canvas. Like the rhythm of music, or the vital rhythm of the visible interrogated by the artist that rhythmic force is sensation, sensation that acts immediately on the nervous system, "which is of the flesh" [*la chair*] (Deleuze 1981a: 27). And, here Deleuze cites an unreferenced remark from Cézanne; that rhythm is a force that works to a "logic of the senses" [*logique des sens*], which Deleuze then explains as a non-rational, non-cerebral logic (31).

"Colouring sensation" does not describe but colours and gives a certain force to that which it passes through. It is created by the artist and with the material of painting—colour—but has a peculiar power of affect. This is something that Deleuze and Guattari develop in *What is Philosophy?* in which they understand art in terms of sensation, as a discipline that deals in the percept and the affect. In *Francis Bacon: Logique de la sensation*, Deleuze gives Bacon as an example of the force of "colouring sensation". When one looks at Bacon's painting of meat, and here *Painting* 1946 (fig. 6.1) is perhaps the most famous example, the accuracy of the visual representation—the red colour of meat—is not the issue, but there is a definite resemblance at the level of sensation: one feels the meat, tastes it, smells it, weighs it—as one does in Soutine (1981a: 31). Deleuze says that such a sensation constitutes

"the forceful moment (non-representative) of *the* sensation" [*le moment «pathique»*] (1981a: 31). "*Le moment* «*pathique*»" does not have a direct translation but I think that it is best understood as implying the "sympathetic communication" characteristic of aesthetic intuition in Bergson's *Creative Evolution* (1911: 176–77). The important point is that it is a non-representative moment in which the sensation is a Proustian experience, which like Combray and the famous taste of the madeleine is a sensation—percept and affect—as it never was or will be lived in the phenomenological sense. This leads Deleuze and Guattari to later identify percepts and as *nonhuman landscapes of nature* and affects as *nonhuman becomings of man* (1991: 169).

I take up the parallel that Deleuze draws between Bacon and Cézanne in regard to the nonhuman in this section of *Francis Bacon: Logique de la sensation*, 'Painting and Sensation' later, in Chapter Six, in which I explore how Bacon constructs certain configurations of colour (Figures) on the canvas, creating rhythms and patterns that embody and preserve the specific Event of the painting in a precise and nonhuman sensation. Here however, I want to tease out Deleuze's notion of the nonhuman with respect to Cézanne in order to put it in the context of the radicalization of the task of painting that is entailed when Merleau-Ponty turns from the depth of the "virtually visible" to colour and the autogenetic line in the 'Eye and Mind' essay.

## ***Nonhuman Becomings***

If art is to stand on its own, independent of creator or viewer, as Deleuze and Guattari advise in *What is Philosophy?*, then the task of art is to wrest the percept from the perception and to paint, as I think Cézanne does in *Montagne Sainte Victoire* 1904–6 (fig. 2.3) as a

"nonhuman landscape of nature" (Deleuze 1991: 169). In *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari explain the percept with a reference to Cézanne, as "the landscape before man, in the absence of man" (169). Like Gasquet's Cézanne who wants the artist drunk (or like Michaux, drugged), happy and swimming in the reality of paint, Deleuze finds the artist losing all temporal, spatial and objective determination and, abandoning himself/herself to the landscape, passes into the landscape, which is thereby still of man, but before man (Gasquet 1921: 183, Deleuze 1991: 169, 169 note 6). Such immersion or fascination—Merleau-Ponty's vocabulary—requires the artist to go beyond the perceptual state and to be "a seer, a becomer" who is saturated with life and who being in touch with the modes and rhythms, lines and colours of life shatters lived perception and finds the percept (Deleuze 1991: 171).

Deleuze and Guattari's example of immersion is from literature, from Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, and demonstrates the town as a percept, or a "nonhuman landscape of nature" because Mrs Dalloway perceives the town by becoming imperceptible herself (never again will I say "*I am this, I am that*") (Deleuze and Guattari 1991: 169; Deleuze and Guattari 1980: 29; Woolf 1925: 11). Passing into the town, "She sliced like a knife through everything: at the same time was outside looking on"; she becomes indistinguishable from the town itself (Woolf 1925, 11).

According to Deleuze and Guattari, in Woolf it is style that counts. Lists of thoughts, observations, memories are built up with the distinctive rhythms and syntax that compose percepts and affects; sensations which carry the life of London but which are not adequate to, or which even undermine, any lived perceptions. Instead of representing London 'as lived' the Woolf's writing embodies London

as 'a life' and preserves the town as a nonhuman landscape and Mrs. Dalloway as a nonhuman becoming. Past and present, London and India, Bond Street and Westminster, early morning or afternoon, are no longer distinguishable. Form is dissolved and the novel is a monument to that non-distinction. Woolf therefore creates a new sensation, not celebrating something that happened or an opinion of London as a city, but catching the rhythms of the town.

Deleuze and Guattari echo and rework Merleau-Ponty by understanding the work of art not, as Merleau-Ponty does in the 'Eye and Mind' essay, as recreating the "delirium which is vision itself" on the canvas or on the page, and so replicating the emergence of the landscape from virtually visible to actual, but as preserving the delirium of the virtual in the movement of the material; the paint, colour, line (Merleau-Ponty 1961: 166).

Deleuze and Guattari argue that it is the material itself that passes into sensation and which is expressive (1991: 167). The sensation—gesture, thrust, smile; metallic, crystalline, stony—is not a perception that refers to an object but is preserved as percept or affect in the work of art—hence the rhythm of Woolf's lists. The percept or affect refers only to the material of the work, and is therefore not coloured, in the sense of it being described and affected, but colouring and affective. If there is resemblance to any perceived object, resemblance is produced on the canvas and made with colour, line and shadow. As Deleuze and Guattari insist,

> If resemblance haunts the work of art, it is because sensation refers only to its material: it is the percept or affect of the material itself, the smile of oil, the gesture of fired clay, the thrust of metal .... (1991: 166)

So we move from Cézanne being immersed in the landscape, in Merleau-Ponty, to Deleuze and Guattari and the landscape as percept, where we see, what Deleuze and Guattari call "Cézanne's enigma": "Man absent from but entirely within the landscape" (1991: 169).[5] As Deleuze and Guattari explain it is not a question of being in the world, but of becoming with the world: "We are not in the world, we become with the world; we become by contemplating it" (169). Far from liberating the phantom of the virtual within the actual, as Merleau-Ponty wants painting to do, Deleuze and Guattari see art raising the actual to the phantastic and, working on the level of the virtual or plane of immanence, create percepts and affects that are worthy of the Event because they keep hold of the infinite movement of the virtual. The problem for art is to "render visible", by its own methods, the movement and the force of its "colouring sensation".

In *Francis Bacon: Logique de la sensation* (1981a), in a move that cuts across the dilemma between the figurative and non-figurative Deleuze follows Cézanne and identifies the "Figure" [*Figure*] (Deleuze's capitalization) as the sensible form that is given to sensation (1981a: 27).[6] Deleuze finds Bacon close to Cézanne in that in his painting the first [*primordiale*] function of the Figure is to "render visible" the

5 Deleuze does not give a specific reference here. He may have Gasquet in mind. Gasquet remembers Cézanne saying that when he reads Lucretius he feels as if he is "saturated by all the shades of the infinite" and merging with the earth (Gasquet 1921: 153).

6 Merleau-Ponty points out that the dilemma between figurative and non-figurative is badly posed, if we understand, as he does, the visible as the surface of a depth: "it is true and uncontradictory that no grape was ever what it is in the most figurative painting and that no painting, no matter how

invisible force of sensation (40). As for Millet, for whom the weight of the peasant's burden was more important than the fact that it was potatoes, Cézanne makes visible the weight of the mountain's geological folds, the germinal life of the apple and the thermal force of the landscape, Van Gogh extracts the incredible beauty of the sunflower [*force inouïe d'une graine de tournesol*], and Bacon the essential violence of the body—the erotic postures of sleep, or of wrestling, the catatonic contortion of the body that has been sitting for too long, the distortion of the face as it screams, smiles or vomits (1981a: 39–41). Those intensities are produced in an energetic configuration of colour and the Figure, as a body that carries [*rapporter*] sensation, becomes an issue of a material–force relation.

We can now begin to understand what Deleuze and Guattari mean when in *What is Philosophy?* they say that "The work of art is a being of sensation and nothing else: it exists in itself" (1991: 164). They are certainly thinking of Merleau-Ponty when they talks about sensations, percepts and affects as "*beings* whose validity lies in themselves and exceeds any lived" (164). And it is Cézanne whom Deleuze evokes as that genius who catches the vapour of life when he declares in *Francis Bacon: Logique de la sensation* that it is the material that becomes expressive, and when he lauds the artist who paints the precise reality of sensation.

> Is it not the genius [*génie*] of Cézanne, to have given over all the means of painting to this task: making visible the force of the fold of the mountains, the force of germination in the apple, the thermal force of the landscape [*paysage*] ... etc? (1981a: 39)

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abstract, can get away from Being, that even Caravaggio's grape is the grape itself" (1961: 188).

The problem the artist faces is how to keep the movement of colour in play, to make the material expressive, and to "render visible" the force of sensation. In other words: what are the means and method of staging the Event on the canvas? In order to answer that question, Deleuze introduces the notion of the diagram.

### *"Colouring sensation" and the Diagram*

The diagram [*le diagramme*] is an important concept for Deleuze, one that is also used by Merleau-Ponty—for whom it is the threshold between the "virtually visible" and the actual—and by Peirce—who understands it as suggestive system of relations and an "abstractive observation" much neglected by philosophers (Merleau-Ponty 1961: 164; Peirce 1940: 98).[7] While Deleuze's philosophy is undoubtedly influenced by both Merleau-Ponty and Peirce, his notion of the diagram is one that he borrows from Bacon—whose portraits are suggested by a preparatory "graph" of chance marks thrown on the canvas.

In his work on Bacon, Deleuze devotes Rubric XII to a discussion of the diagram. He translates Bacon's "graph" as *le diagramme* and defines it as "an operative group of lines and zones, asignificant and non-representative strokes and patches" [*l'ensemble opératoire des lignes et des zones, des traits et des taches asignifiants et non représentifs.*] (66). As such the diagram functions on the threshold between the preparatory work

[7] See: Dee Reynolds, *Symbolist Aestheticcs and Early Abstract Art: Sites of Imaginary Space* (1995). Reynolds's discusses the diagram in Peirce's work as concerned with relations in the constitution of the thing, relations that work on the meta-discursive level of the imaginary and which reveal unexpected connections (Reynolds 1995: 195–97).

and the act of painting; it is a chaos full of potential. Deleuze calls it a "chaos-germ" [*chaos-germe*]. The diagram has a productive role: to be suggestive [*«suggérer»*] and to introduce constructive possibilities [*«possibilitiés de fait»*]. Deleuze argues that, because these new possibilities arise only out of the manual throw of paint, they escape the optical, and therefore human centred, organization of representation and the 'thing'. One no longer sees any thing—as in a catastrophe or chaos.

> It [the diagram] is like the assurgent appearance [*surgissement*] of another world. These marks, these strokes [*ces marques, ces traits*] are irrational, involuntary, accidental, free, random [*au hasard*]. They are non-representative, non-illustrative, non-narrative. But they are no longer significant or signifying: they are asignifying lines. (1981a: 66)

Deleuze specifically associates the diagram and its non-punctual topology with a new reality, a reality that he identifies, after Cézanne, with the "indeterminate sensation" [*sensation confuses*] that the artist "brings about" [*apporte en naissant*] (1981a: 66). I suggest that here Deleuze is reading Cézanne through Merleau-Ponty because in the 'Eye and Mind' essay Merleau-Ponty specifically likens the painter's disclosure of how the virtually visible becomes visible as a "continued birth" [*une naissance continuée*] (Merleau-Ponty 1961: 168 [32]). But, while here Merleau-Ponty celebrates that movement from the pre-human to human visibility as the moment when the human is born, Deleuze's equation of virtuality with indeterminate sensation [*sensation confuses*] reiterates his theorization of the virtual as a domain of infinite movement, movement which is beyond the human, and that produces sensation which is independent of the human—nonhuman becoming.

As an "operative group of lines and zones" the diagram turns attention towards the constitution and structure of the work. In the eighth rubric of *Francis Bacon: Logique de la sensation* 'Analogy', Deleuze details two aspects of the chaos and catastrophe of the diagram; geology, which is a "framework" [*«charpente»*] (a framework that in Merleau-Ponty is a "*membrure*"); and colour, which is sensation, or more accurately "colouring sensation" [*«sensation colorante»*] (1981a: 73; Merleau-Ponty 1964: 215). Deleuze's analysis mirrors Cézanne's own parallel between earth and cosmos, and geology and colour; as I discussed in my reading of Merleau-Ponty and Gasquet's Cézanne, above. Indeed, he acknowledges Gasquet in a footnote, and reminds the reader that in Cézanne the geology is the support that earths the image, while colour lets it soar: the earth reaches for the sun [*la terre monte vers le soleil*] (73). In fact the diagram is exactly what Cézanne calls the motif—the relationship [*rapport*] of framework and colour that gives life to the painting.

Deleuze is at pains to stress that geology and colour are intertwined in Cézanne's painting. Without framework, colour lacks life and clarity [*de durée et de clarté*] produces empty abstraction, without colour, geometry is empty [*abstraité*] (1981a: 73). Together they work as structural and compositional elements that give the painting solidity, life and clarity [*concrète/sensible, durée, clarté*], and importantly they do that without recourse to the imposition of an exterior point of view. The diagram thus works on two fronts: it is the suggestive chaos-germ [*chaos-germe*], and it is the chaos [*gâcher*] that works against, lays waste—a verb that carries the same connotation as the French *gâcher*, to spoil—and resists optical order (66).

This operative work of the diagram is particularly clear in the late

Cézanne, for instance in the modulating image of *Montagne Sainte-Victoire* 1904–6 (fig. 2.3), while the infinite movement of this internal animation is particularly clear in the case of Mondrian, whose work I discuss in the next chapter. In Mondrian's grids, as in Cézanne's late work, the diagram sets up a chaotic or catastrophic domain in which lines and marks and patches of colour oscillate and where depth is indefinite; it is a zone which is animated but where that expression—sensation as affect or percept—does not inhere in any lived state but in a virtual topology. The diagram can thus be understood as the staging of the Event in painting.

### Staging the Event

Each artist has his or her own inimitable style and, because of that particular diagram of traits and marks, a distinctive method of staging the Event.[8] In *Francis Bacon: Logique de la sensation*, Deleuze identifies three broad approaches, three different ways in which the painter returns to the work of colour and line. These are exemplified respectively by Mondrian, Pollock and Bacon. These artists are all the subject of further discussion in this thesis, but here I want to continue my discussion of the diagram by showing how these artists work with the double structure of im-materiality identified by Deleuze in the two moments of "colouring sensation" [«*sensation colorante*»] and framework [*charpente*], and to demonstrate that double structure as the staging of

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[8] I have borrowed the phrase "staging the Event" from Keith Ansell Pearson. In a section of his book *Germinal Life* entitled 'Staging the Event' he discusses Deleuze's complex conception of the Event. He usefully puts Deleuze's Event in the context of Spinoza, Leibniz and Nietzsche, pointing out that Deleuze's reading is far from idiosyncratic (Ansell Pearson 1999: 121–29).

the Deleuzian Event—the new reality that, as Deleuze and Guattari identify in *What is Philosophy?*, keeps the infinite movement of virtual multiplicity at the same time as it is actualized in a state of affairs (1991: 156).

Deleuze's first example is Mondrian who sets up a digital code and produces a novel, purely optical space. In a play on the English word 'digit' and on the French '*doigt*' [finger] and '*digital*' [digital], Deleuze explains that digital does not mean manual but numeral. Under the asceticism of Mondrian's straight lines runs a stream of digital chaos which you have to get over to recover the figurative form (and so see the canvas as a geometrical composition), while his solid squares are figurative (landscapes [*paysage*]) and jump over the chaos. There is a tension between the figurative shapes and the defiguration wrought by the oscillating lines. In this tension we see the radiant multiplicity of digital counts; dots and colours that dance in an indeterminate depth and which dazzle the eye.

In contrast to the ascetic formality of Mondrian's canvases, Pollock's abstract expressionism eludes form with an "all over" informal chaos of lines and colours that "neither begins nor ends". Deleuze says that he finds in Pollock something that, for him, makes modern painting different to abstraction: rhythm (1981a: 68). Here the matter of paint is given its maximal extension and the diagram takes over the canvas. The optical space collapses and the manual line pervades. In Pollock the painting becomes at once both a catastrophe and a diagram [*une peinture-catastrophe et une peinture-diagramme*] (68). Deleuze reads Pollock's lines as gothic, lines that run between [*entre*] points rather than from point to point, which never ceases to change direction, and which attain a power "of more than 1" [*supérieure à 1*] where the line holds for a surface and where the depth that is the

"virtually visible" has found consistency as a topological surface (68).[9]

From this point of view, abstraction remains figurative since the line still delimits a contour, but a rather unusual contour (1981a: 68). The contour that is produced in the intersection of chaotic lines does not outline, but instead extends the movement and rhythm of the diagram. The figurative is then here not aligned with representation, and is not in opposition to abstraction.

Deleuze draws a parallel between the work of Pollock, and that of Velasquez and Turner—between the abstract and the particular figuration, even portraiture as in the case of Velasquez, of these more traditional artists. He finds the same radical figuration in Velasquez, who is a painter who "paints between things" [*«peindre entre des choses»*], and in the late watercolours of Turner—who not only conquered impressionism, but also the explosive line and the line without contour, in order to paint the catastrophe (68).

The diagram as an agent of defiguration [*déformation*] and waste [*gâcher*] is most obvious in Bacon, the artist whom Deleuze cites in his third example of the diagram. Deleuze thinks that Bacon is Cézannian because he dissolves form, deforms the body or face, and opens the Figure to the chance and irrational marks of the diagram and "colour sensation". Drawing on the interviews with David Sylvester, Deleuze uses Bacon's notion of the graph [translated as *le diagramme*], to discuss

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9 This seems a particularly obscure phrase. It was made clear to me by Deleuze's own mention of Pollock in *The Fold* where he uses Pollock and Rauschenberg to explain the Baroque surface as a surface that stops being a window on the world and becomes a grid of information: "the line with infinite inflection holds for a surface" (Deleuze 1993: 27).

how colour and line work as material elements of painting (Sylvester 1975: 56).

In Bacon the graph is the haphazard splashes of paint thrown on the canvas. Like a catastrophe, or the wastes of "a Sahara"—an analogy uses by both Deleuze and Bacon—it is a zone where all perspective is lost, and where the smooth space of pure colour works against the standard language and closure of perception (Deleuze 1981a: 66; Sylvester 1975: 56).[10] The graph belongs entirely to the painting but, even so, must be said to precede the act of painting, and in this sense Bacon's figures both occupy and pre-occupy the canvas because they are already in the canvas, and what we see on the canvas is the struggle between the paint and the particularity of the figures which afterwards [*après coup*] arise from it. Deleuze likens it to "a catastrophe taking place on the canvas, in the grid of (figurative and chance) information [*les données figuratives et probabilities*] (1981a: 65). The graph is a specific but chance play of colour which, like the disorienting cacophony of images in Mrs. Dalloway's London, is a constructuve defiguration that sets up a nonhuman becoming and a new sensations.[11] What becomes clear is that the Event of painting is not a shadowy phantom but real, consistent and im-material.

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[10] When the "Sahara" is introduced into the work there is no sense of orientation of proportion. Bacon likens this to seeing something under a microscope (perhaps the skin of the rhinoceros) or through a telescope; you change the units of measure from the human, to the microscopic or the cosmic (Sylvester 1975: 56; Deleuze 1981: 65).

[11] For a succinct summary of Deleuze's position on abstract painting as an escape from the clichés of figuration, see: Daniel Smith, 'Deleuze's Theory of Sensation: Overcoming the Kantian Duality' (Smith 1996: 29–56).

In *Germinal Life* (1999), Keith Ansell Pearson usefully explains the staging of the event as a double structure. Actualization in a state of affairs (as a consistency on the canvas) is doubled by a counter-actualization that keeps the im-material movement of virtuality in play:

> On the one hand there is necessarily the present moment of its actualization: the event 'happens' and gets embodied in a state of affairs .... On the other hand, the event continues to 'live on', enjoying its own past and future, haunting each present, making the present return as a question of the present, and free of the limits placed on it by any given state of affairs. (1999: 124)

While in perception the event appears to be transcendent to the actual state of affairs, when this double articulation occurs on the canvas the Event (as identified by Deleuze and Guattari) is embodied in a state of affairs but continues to exist as a percept that is an entirely immanent movement indifferent to actualization. As Deleuze and Guattari maintain in *What is Philosophy?*

> it [the Event] has a shadowy and secret part that is continually subtracted from or added to its actualization: in contrast with the state of affairs, it neither begins nor ends but has kept the infinite movement to which it gives consistency. (1991: 156)

In Cézanne's "modern painting"—Klee and Matisse are also mentioned by Merleau-Ponty as artists who sever their adherence to "the envelope of things"—that movement is carried in the modulation of colour. It is perhaps most obvious in Mondrian's grids and

Pollock's "all-over" work, which I discuss in the next two chapters of this thesis, canvases that encapsulate what Deleuze and Guattari mean when they go on to claim that,

> [But], even in this state of affairs, the event is pure immanence of what is not actualized or of what remains indifferent to actualization, since its reality does not depend on it. The event is immaterial, incorporeal, unlivable: pure *reserve.* (Deleuze and Guattari 1991: 156)

The diagram, or graph, sets up the virtual topology of the Event where marks, colour and line oscillate in the infinite movement of depth, a depth that traverses and animates the Figure. Though Deleuze does not reference Merleau-Ponty here, the coincidence of vocabulary is a reference in itself. Merleau-Ponty describes the invisible, or virtually visible as "in my body as *a diagram* of the life of the actual" [*le diagramme de sa vie dans mon corps*] [my italics] (1961: 164, [1961: 24]). The diagram is the "pulp and carnal obverse" of life [*son envers charnel*] and the flesh according to which we see (164.).

In Deleuze the diagram has the same operative quality but in Deleuze it is not the depth of the visible and that according to which we see, but a movement of composition, a '*l'ensemble opératoire*' that works on the level of the plane of immanence. What Deleuze sees in Bacon is the artist working at that level, using the suggestion of that immanent composition to draw out contours and to construct the Figure that carries the "colouring sensation" set up by the diagram; the Figure "without image". He paints heads that seem glorious, disturbing, and horrible, and makes twisted bodies that are contorted in a violence that belong only to the convulsion of 'flesh'; the diagram and its strange topological spaces. His Figures are taken over by the

scream or the orgasm, the expulsion of vomit or break of a smile. He does so by listening to the song of the paint; to the diagram and colour that itself vibrates and spasms, surges and splits. Bacon thus saves the contour without the danger of a retreat into chaos and what Bacon calls the "mess" of abstract expressionism.

The double structure of the diagram is most clearly seen in the ascetic diagrams that Mondrian sets up in his abstract work of 1920–44 where he stages the Event by taking the rectilinear system to breaking point. He puts the diagram to work. It is clear in these paintings that the silence of the invisible is an extraordinarily resonant silence and that the curious spaces that the diagram opens up have a life and logic of their own. We will see that that virtual topology is not a chaotic invisible depth but an inflective, coherent and differentiated plane that produces morphological images—images that emerge as shape and patterns, and which like the Bergsonian image that is so important in Deleuze's analysis of the cinema, are images that can only be understood from the point of view of their composition and genesis.[12] As Deleuze and Guattari say, "There are rules, rules of 'pla(n)ing', of diagramming …" (Deleuze and Guattari 1980: 70). Rules of painting. What are those rules, and how does painting work if it is to fulfil the task of standing up on its own as a being of sensation? We begin with Mondrian.

[12] The mathematician, Ian Stewart, is also concerned with the morphology of life. In *Life's Other Secret: The New Mathematics of the Living World* Stewart explores the mathematics of biology, and argues that DNA capitalises on physical principles and processes to produce the distinctive patterns of life—reproduction, evolution, development and ecosystems. He coins the term "morphomatics" for his proposed mathematics of emergence, a mathematics which recognizes life as a process rather than a substance, and which deals with qualitative rather than quantative data (Stewart 1998: 140, 245).

# CHAPTER 3

# MONDRIAN

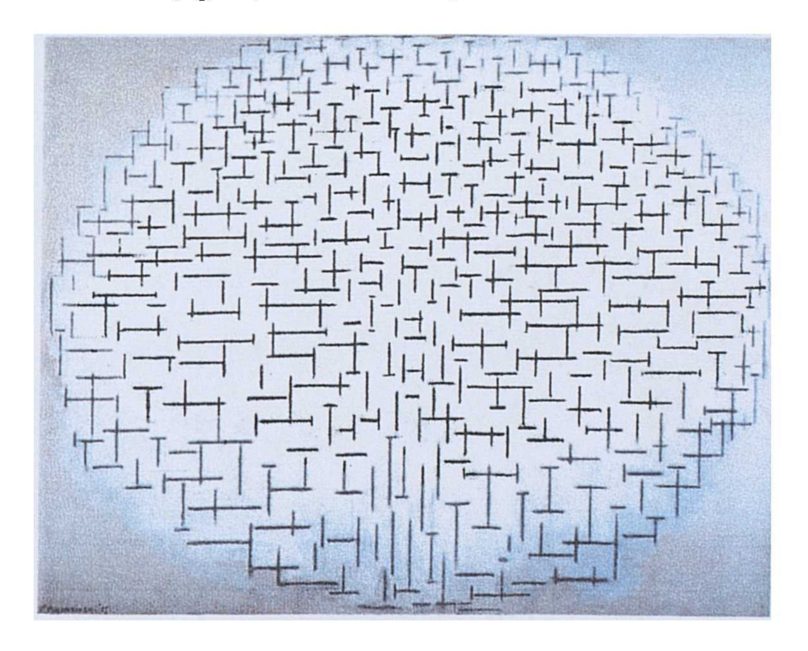
## The Destruction of Space



(fig. 3.1) Juan Gris, *Violin and Checkerboard* 1913



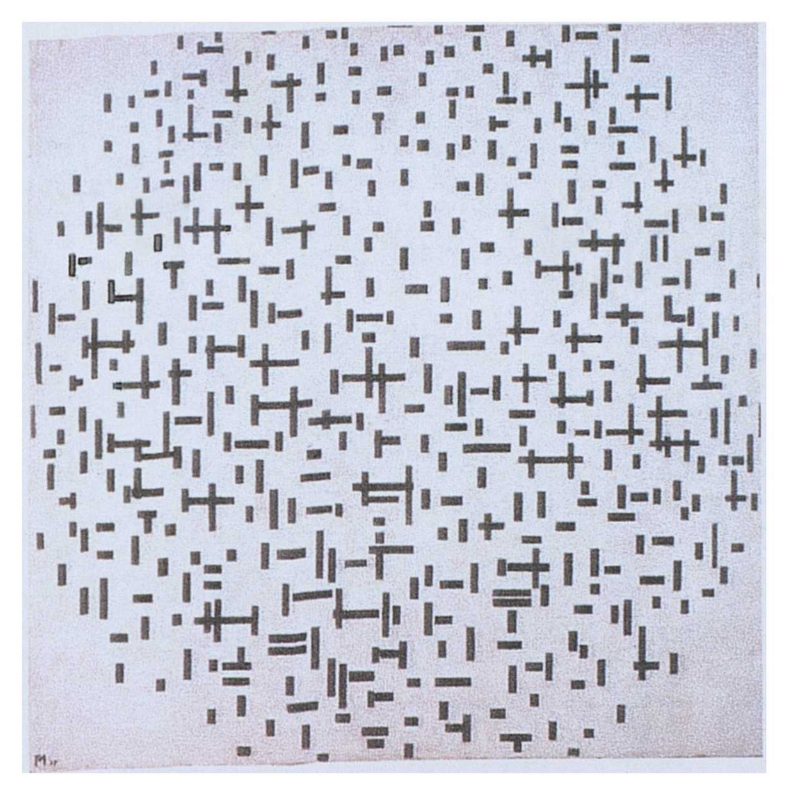
(fig.3.2) Mondrian, *Chrysanthemum* 1900



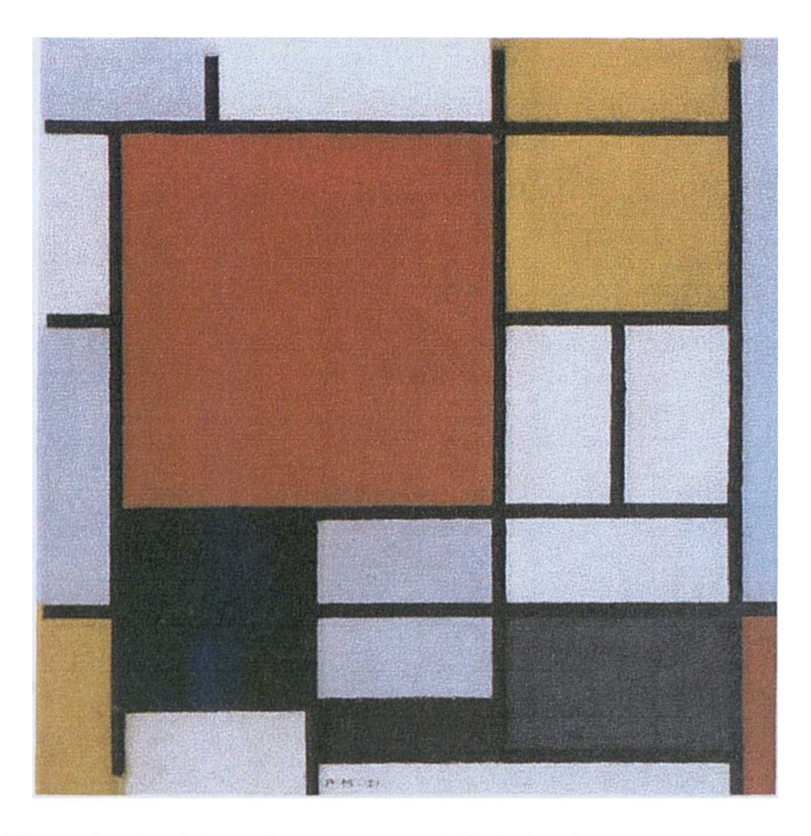
(fig. 3.3) Mondrian, *Composition No. 10 (Pier and Ocean)* 1915



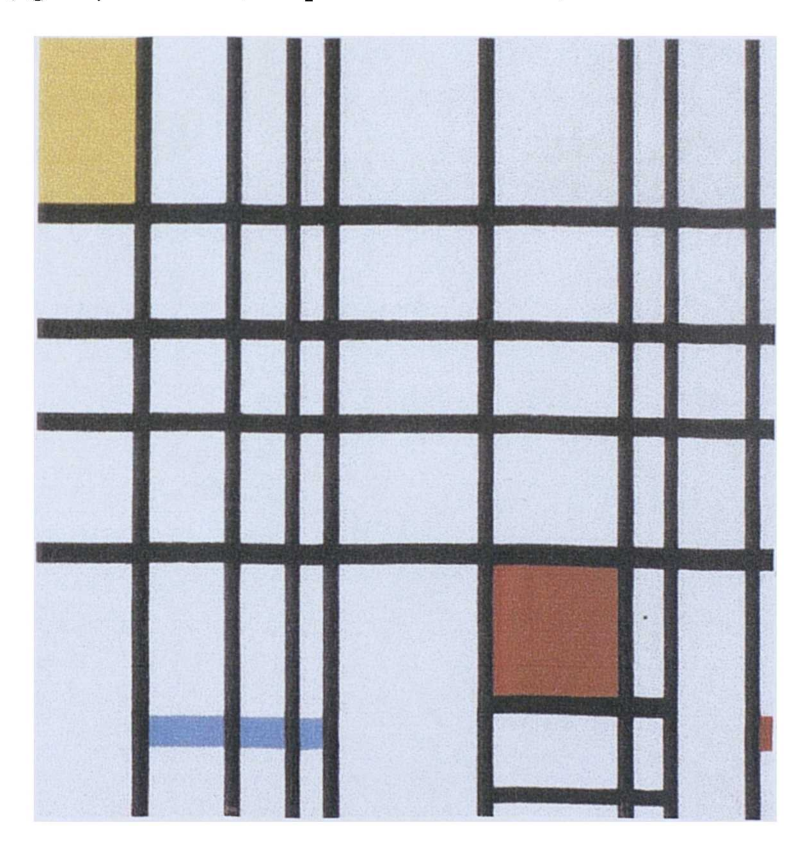
(fig. 3.4) Mondrian, *Flowering Apple Tree* 1912



(fig. 3.5) Mondrian, *Composition in Lines (Black and White)* 1916–17



(fig. 3.6) Mondrian, *Composition in Red, Yellow, Blue and Black* 1921



(fig. 3.7) Mondrian, *Composition in Red,Yellow and Blue* 1937–42



(fig. 3.8) Mondrian, *New York City II (unfinished)* c. 1942

> *... not the construction of space (form), but the destruction of it is what abstract art requires.*
>
> Piet Mondrian, 1942 (1987: 385)[1]

## *From Shape to Line*

Writing in 1960, Clement Greenberg finds Mondrian the quintessential Modernist abstractionist: the "utter abstractness" of his grids observe the strict limiting, and traditional, condition of the picture; the use of colour is conservative; and there is subservience to the frame (Greenberg 1993: 90). Mondrian's art is deemed static, framed, punctual and flat. The images are seen as rigidly two-dimensional with no hint of the figurative or the three-dimensional illusion of space that opens up the possibility of representation and the recognisable image. For Greenberg, this resolute orientation to flatness and a purely optical picture-space puts Mondrian "among the very greatest painters of the century", along with Léger, Matisse and Picasso. But ironically, it is when Mondrian risks the norms of the picture that his work proves to be most conservative.

Greenberg defines Modernism in painting as precisely that move which acknowledges the norms and conditions of painting—the flat surface, the rectangular canvas and the properties of colour—to be defining factors. He cites Manet as the first Modernist painter, and approaches Mondrian through Cézanne, Matisse and Cubism (1993: 86, 13). He observes that, even though in his grids Mondrian has

[1] This quote is from a note on space-determination from 1942, found among Mondrian's papers. See: 'A Folder of Notes' in Mondrian, *The New* Art–*The New Life: Collected Writings of Piet Mondrian* (Mondrian 1987: 385).

pushed back the limiting conditions of the picture and reduced the painting to black lines and coloured rectangles, the form still echoes the picture's traditional frame. Indeed, he thinks that the very limitations of the pictorial form are, for Mondrian, positive factors, and he notes that,

> The crisscrossing black lines and coloured rectangles of a Mondrian painting seem hardly enough to make a picture out of, yet they impose the picture's framing shape as a regulating norm with a new force and completeness by echoing that shape so closely. (90)

The frame is paralleled by the intersecting lines and the rigidity of the solid rectangles, so repeating the neat convergence of the enclosing shape and the picture as a discontinuous, complete and closed image. Greenberg thus argues that abstract art confirms rather than subverts the tradition of the frame and that Modernism continues the past, "It may mean a devolution, an unravelling, of tradition, but it also means its further evolution" (1993: 92).

Greenberg does not make any distinction between abstract art and the representational or figurative tradition; abstract art just presents the requirements of all painting in its purest most distilled form (82). Modernism is not a question of abstract or non-abstract but of the abandonment of the representational illusion of three-dimensional space and a commitment to working on the picture plane. Thus there is a place in Greenberg's Modernism for the non-abstract Modernism of Manet, Matisse or Leger. Modernism is not characterized by a new subject matter, but by its commitment to the structural principles of painting and the new kind of picture-space that it sets up. The tradition of perspective and representational space gives way to flat optical

spaces, and a composition of lines and planes of colour. Thus in his article 'Obituary and Review of an Exhibition by Kandinsky' (1945), Greenberg argues that to free painting from representation is to set up a new pictorial space and to "recapture of the literal realisation of the physical limitations and conditions of the medium" (Greenberg 1968: 3–6 and quoted in Osborne 1991: 65). For Greenberg, Mondrian confirms the basic structural principles of the Western tradition, and ultimately his work succeeds or fails on the same basis as a Titian or a Rembrandt—the formal unity governed by the principles of frame, colour and flatness (1993: 83). However Mondrian's "utter abstraction" is far from being an absolute flatness, as Greenberg acknowledges.

The non-representational, formalized and geometric space that Greenberg sees is not as static as it might first appear. Indeed, he goes on to admit that the Modernist rationale that dictates flatness is a simplification and an exaggeration, and that despite the fact that the flatness of a Mondrian grid does not permit the *trompe-l'oeil* effect of three-dimensional space and natural appearance, the work does open onto an optical illusion.

Greenberg notes that, paradoxically, it is Mondrian's strict conformity to the horizontal and vertical that inverts the two-dimensional to produce what he calls "a kind of illusion that suggests a kind of third dimension" (90).[2] Flatness, it seems, does not necessarily mean a punctual discontinuity or the stillness of fixed shape, and as we

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[2] Here Greenberg contrasts the *trompe l'oeil* sculptural "illusion of space in depth" created by the Old Masters—a space one could imagine walking into—with the analogous Modernist pictorial illusion, a space which can only be seen into.

shall see, it is an indefinite dimensionality that prevails in Mondrian's later work.

The pictorial "illusion" is for Greenberg a space "that was felt, if not read, as flat" (Greenberg 1954: 113). Here, in an article from 1954 on Léger, Greenberg is talking about Cubism and collage but the point could as easily be made about Mondrian's work. What is important for Greenberg is that abstract art maintains the rational coherence of the flat surface, and therefore the integrity of painting as independent. The object is formalized as a configuration of planes, as if rolled flat, but nevertheless, the different textures, speeds and rhythms of those planes sets up the pictorial illusion of "a kind of three dimensions". There is it seems a problem in reading the space as flat. Greenberg sees the illusion of depth as an unsought consequence in Mondrian's work, a consequence which is nevertheless interpreted by him, as an efficacious "new rule of coherence" in the same mould as the Synthetic Cubism of Léger, Braque and Picasso (113).[3]

The fact that Greenberg finds Mondrian unsuccessful in rendering absolute flatness led me to look at his grids again and to ask what the

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[3] While Analytic Cubism—Juan Gris (fig. 3.1)—is characterised by facet-planes that merge the object with the picture plane, Synthetic cubism—Léger, Braque, Picasso—is identified by "definite and linear contours" and a lack of shading. This definition works at the level of the flatness of the surface, but even here Greenberg sees an escape from flatness in the way that the image appears to stand proud of the canvas and to extend into the non-pictorial real space in front of the canvas. Picasso's constructed bas-relief, like *Construction: Guitar* 1912 or the numerous other constructions of guitar and violin made between 1912 and 1916, plays on this illusion by extending the different planes of the pictorial surface into actual space.

lines are really doing. I shall argue that it is that very unsought and undrawn consequence of depth that opens onto the much more interesting virtual space of indefinite dimensionality, and that rather than the stillness of the flat surface we have canvases that vibrate and dance. Indeed, I would question whether two-dimensionality is really a guarantee of painting's independence and 'purity', and whether Greenberg's definition of Modernism as a concern with two-dimensionality and flatness is very useful when even an artist as 'abstract' as Mondrian fails to deliver.

An alternative to Greenberg's art criticism is represented by Harold Rosenberg; a polarization that is exemplified in their different approaches to expressionism in painting. While Greenberg finds expressionist content in the pure physicality of the painting—an expression that depends on flatness—Rosenberg identifies with the spiritual, even theological, expressionism suggested by Kandinsky and Mondrian's interest in theosophy, and carried over into the way that Rothko and Newman understand their work.[4] It is not flatness that is important to Rosenberg, but the status of the work as Abstract Expressionism, or as in his expressionist reading of Pollock's work, as "action painting".

Georges Bataille offers an interesting alternative reading of "pure

[4] See: Peter Osborne's article 'Modernism, Abstraction, and the Return to Painting' for an overview of Modernist art criticism, including the Greenberg–Rosenberg debate (Benjamin and Osborne 1991: 59–79).

See also: Robert Pippen *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem*, Chapter Two 'Modernity and Modernism' for a discussion of the paradox of Modernist art as both revolutionary and liberating, and reductive and formal (Pippin 1991: 29–45)

painting" in his short commentary *Manet* (1955). He focuses on the movement inherent in the picture-space. Bataille acknowledges that Manet moves from "narrative anecdotal painting to pure painting—patches, colour, movement", while still remaining a subject painter. He does not see Manet's picture-space as flat; it is interwoven and animated, even musical (Bataille 1955: 45). Referring to *Manet's Portrait of Baudelaire's Mistress* 1862, Bataille says that, Manet "transposed the merely picturesque into a delicate fugue of calico and lace" and later that Manet's work is "painting for its own sake, a song for the eyes of interwoven forms and colours" (30, 35). Bataille makes much of, what he calls the "silence of destruction" in Manet but like Merleau-Ponty's silent invisible this plane of colour is an extraordinary resonant silence. The subject slips into a "tremor of suspended animation", investing the canvas with a forceful "fugitive presence" (114).

The animation that Bataille sees in Manet is not unlike the modulating movement that I see in Mondrian's grids. Both painters set up a picture-space that frees painting from perspective and the representational tradition but that move does not restrict 'pure painting' and optical space to flatness. The animated space of Manet's painting, like that which I find in Mondrian, disrupts the principles of Modernism as identified by Greenberg, but works with the "patches, colours and movement" essential to Bataille's definition of "pure painting". This leads me to conclude that the mechanical model of space as a closed construction is not a useful model with which to approach what is happening on the canvas, and that that space is not exhausted by the determination of the point–line configuration of formal geometry. I go on to explain that it is precisely this 'crack' in the rigidity of the formal aesthetic that allows for the dislocation of the complete and the closed space. The 'crack' opens onto a fantastic, virtual, and strictly counter-representational space, a space that, in her

book *Symbolist Aesthetics and Early Abstract Art: Sites of Imaginary Space* (1995), Dee Reynolds calls an "imaginary space" because it is an incorporeal space liberated from any definition.

I will come back to Reynold's notion later, but here I want to stress that this indefinable space is the product of disruptive practices which sets up a new reality, one beyond both a traditional representational schema and the self-referential model of Modernism. As Reynolds suggests via her analysis of the disruptive signifying practices of Mondrian, Kandinsky, Rimbaud and Mallarmé, "Such art does not reflect reality, but neither does it reflect itself: it sets itself the task of producing and proposing new models for experience" (1995: xii).

We have here two very different models of pictorial space—the formal or striated space and the modulating or smooth—and two very different lines; the rectilinear line that echoes and marks out the formal pictorial space, and the abstract line that wards off the ideal of flatness and the fixed space of the framed picture. Mondrian's work is revolutionary because the lines of his grids do not delimit or define a shape, but are abstract lines. In other words, his work is abstract precisely because it does not conform to the frame, acknowledge flatness, or accept colour as an attribute. It does, however, produce a curious animation. I propose that Mondrian breaks through the model of determined, formal space that is integral to Greenberg's notion of pictorial integrity—a space that is identified by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980) as "striated space"—and produces a non-formal space—Deleuze and Guattari's "smooth space"—and that as such it proposes a new model for experience (1980: 474–500).

Deleuze and Guattari draw a similar contrast between the rectilinear line and the abstract line in the plateau '1440: The Smooth and the

Striated' in *A Thousand Plateaus* where they pose the question, "What then should be termed *abstract* in modern art?" (1980: 499). They identify two very different spaces in art, the amorphous acentred space of the smooth, and a closed dimensional striated space. They conclude that those different spaces are realized by the work of very different lines. The first is the geometrical, punctual line that expresses the formal conditions under which space is striated. This line is inherently representational because, even though it doesn't represent anything in particular, it echoes the frame and thus effectively represents the picture itself as an ideal rectilinear space, as Greenberg thinks Mondrian's grids do. The second line is the multi-directional mutant line—Deleuze and Guattari reference Pollock's free line—the line "that describes no contour and delimits no form ..." (1980: 499).

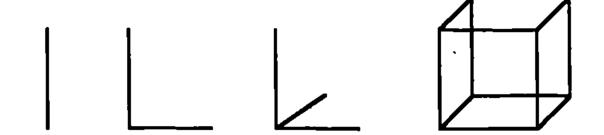
This abstract line is not contained by the point but remains free and realizes the abstraction of smooth space. We can then understand the move from representation to abstraction as the destruction of (striated/dimensional) space. Here there is a striking parallel between Deleuze and Guattari's description of lines that work in smooth space and Mondrian's own understanding of the expression of the abstract. Mondrian observes that Cubism "broke the closed line, the contour that delimits individual form", and that Kandinsky "broke the closed line that describes the broad contour of objects" (Mondrian 1987: 64). However while Cubism went only so far as to fragment the object, and Kandinsky remained with the capricious curved line and an expression of natural feeling, Mondrian himself aimed for the complete break with form and the plastic expression of the abstract wrought by "the intensification of form to the straight line" (64).

In Mondrian's destruction of space, both two-dimensional flatness (Greenberg's ideal of Modernism) and the three-dimensional illusion

of representational space are overtaken by the force of the straight, but abstract, line. In a move from the striated to the smooth, space becomes no longer an issue of shape and completeness, but of the line and the infinite. However, this does not mean that Mondrian is not an artist of 'pure painting', indeed as Sylvester is quick to assert a Mondrian is "the most self-sufficient of painted surfaces (besides being as intimate as a Dutch interior)" (1997: 135). The move to line demands that we think about 'pure painting'—and about Modernism—in a different way: as painting that breaks through the restriction of the representational frame, and which works with the abstraction of "smooth space".

Before exploring this revolution to abstraction, and as a point of contrast to Mondrian's move to the destruction of (striated) space, I want to take a look at the work of the line in the conventional, construction of formal Euclidean space. This is the line that is subordinate to the point, and which delimits form—whether that form is the representational illusion of three-dimensional reality or the two-dimensionality of the flat picture plane.

### *Punctual Systems*



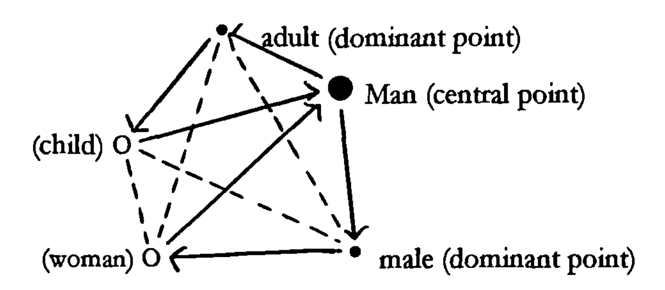
In a punctual system we form the line by joining the points. The line frames. The line marks out and constructs space. It shapes and delimits form. We turn it once to form the right angle and to open

onto the plane. We turn it twice to form the cube, and three times to form the hyper-cube. One dimension, two dimensions, three dimensions, four .... In a punctual system we feel the pulse, follow the beat, apply the rules of proportion and perspective. This is a mathematical project, a principled art. Here there is a structural relationship: point is to line as line is to plane. Look at the construction, everything in agreement. Point to line to plane. Space is deferred to the point; space is referenced, ordered and understood—*l'entendement*.

In a punctual system each turn refers to a single principle of ordering, that most fundamental principle of structure, proportion. Geometry = measurement. Each turn is a reflection of the point. Here geometry is about formal issues of appearance and representation. It is a plan of construction, scheming and politic. It is the constrictive, punctual and ordinal art of numeracy. It is an art that constructs space, an art of distinguished and fixed points. Where one point is referenced to another, and another, the line is formed, and then the plane. The point acts as an immobile origin in the geometric schema, point to line to plane. There is an absolute subordination of the line to the point. It is the point of reference, dominating space, organizing and distributing tensions and oppositions. It is at once both the coordinated and the coordinating point, a didactic and focal point, or as Deleuze and Guattari have it, the "third eye" (1980: 292).

This "submission of the line to the point" is characteristic of centred, hierarchical or closed systems, and what in *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari call "the aborescent schema" in contrast to the "rhizomatic" development of the multiplicity and of open systems

(1980: 293).[5] Deleuze and Guattari present the schema of majority as typical of the arborescence because it demonstrates its hierarchical structure (see below) (544). Here "man" is the "central point" on which the system ultimately converges, and from which the lines of the figure ebb and flow. Juan Gris's drawing *Violin and Checherboard* 1913 (fig. 3.1), and E. Jouffret *Sixteen Fundamental Octagons of the Ikosahedroid* 1903 are artistic and mathematical equivalents, the salient feature of each being that the structure converges on a central point and that the lines are determined by, and subordinate to, that fixed point of reference. The figures present a mechanistic system of spatialization where each line is a component part of a whole, and measured and identified by its position to a fixed, exterior point.




Within this geometric model the key referents to the central point are the simple axes, and the horizontal line and the vertical line that form the right angle. The principle of this right and proper angle is basic to any other point or line in the system. Functioning as a regulating norm, the axes form the enclosing shape and limiting condition of the picture, like a frame. The points are coordinates and the line is the tension between fixed points and represents the relation of those points. The line moves only between points: points that are always external points of origin. This line constructs space

[5] See: Deleuze and Guattari's introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus* in which they contrast the centred structure of the tree–root system with the acentred complexity of the rhizome or multiplicity (1980 3–25).

systematically and the "plan(e)" formed by the intersection of lines is grounded by the zero point (0,0) (Deleuze and Guattari 1980: 265–68).[6]

Deleuze and Guattari's use of the term "arborescent" fits with Mondrian's early theorization of the point. According to art critic David Sylvester, Mondrian understood the point as a point of repose and equilibrium, a sort of check to the ebb and flow of natural growth (1997: 134). But such a containment of energy is a potentially explosive intensity, an intensity evident in Mondrian's early paintings of flowers, particularly *Chrysanthemum* 1900 (fig. 3.2) where the structure closes in on itself, driven by a centripetal force that sucks it into the originary point. As we shall see by following the development of Mondrian's work from flower, to tree, ocean and the later grids, the later non-figurative work is not a break with the object so much as a radicalization of Mondrian's preoccupation with the zero point in which he realizes the inherent indetermination of (0,0)—an indetermination which resists closure.

The intense point is a feature not just of the Mondrian's flower paintings but of Mondrian's tree series where the movement is an ebb and flow from the central trunk, and of the *Pier and Ocean* work where the short vertical and horizontal lines of the sea to-and-fro from the centred pier. In both series there is an increased density of line and colour at the point of convergence, as if the image was fed and fired from the centre. The growth and the decay of the tree, and the ebb

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[6] See: '1730: Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal …' in which Deleuze and Guattari distinguish between two ways of conceptualizing the plane: a) The structural plane that is a necessary condition of design and form, hence the use of the term "plan(e)"; b) The plane of consistency or composition which knows only relations between unformed elements (1980: 265–68).

and flow of the tide, are a tragic expression endlessly repeated and always secured—but ultimately to be drawn into the black hole of the fixed point, and death. In the later grid work the zero point becomes not a point of repose but a vibrant and heterogeneous point that dances and dazzles.

For the moment however, what is important to note is that, as Mondrian shows in his tree series, what Deleuze and Guattari call "the arborescent schema" does not mean *statis* but the natural growth and secured, habitual repetition of the grounded process. Mondrian tries to annihilate the regularity of growth with opposition and equilibrium, and so make repose plastically visible.[7] His concern is to move beyond punctual systems and naturalistic space to a "direct plastic expression of the universal" (1987: 42). To this end he comes to see colour, dimension and position not as attributes but as relations, and his work becomes more and more rhythmic, more and more musical (153). I suggest that in his grids Mondrian produces lines that are not subordinated to the point and that do not fit Deleuze and Guattari's model of "the arborescent schema". Mondrian thus moves from deference to the point–line system and representation, to the free line and abstraction.

## *The Musical Line*

So, what about the line itself; the line not effected by the point? This line does not outline or shape, nor does it conform to the simple axes. It does not evolve from, or return to, the principle of the point, and is not proportional. Instead, this is a line that involves, that has a

[7] See Mondrian's essay 'Natural Reality and Abstract Reality: A Trialogue (While Strolling from the Country to the City) (1919–20)' (1987: 82).

mode, movement and texture, which has speed and direction, and which accelerates and slows down? It is a line that destroys punctual space, and which is disorderly, dissonant and disaffected; that is free. This is the line as counterpoint and also as vector. Such a line does not converge on the point and therefore is quite different from the closed line that contours and delimits form. Not being closed it cannot outline and define and, liberated from any particular definition, is distinguished only by its traits and texture. As Sylvester suggests, the line that is freed from the point has an autonomy which make it "less referential, more and more musical" (1997: 433). It is dynamic; it has rhythm and speed.

The move from shape and the line that delimits form to the free rhythmic line involves an ontological transformation that takes painting from representation to abstraction. As Mondrian understands it, this transformation requires the destruction of space (form) and the freeing of the line:

> The important task of all art, then, is to destroy the static equilibrium by establishing a dynamic one. Non-figurative art demands an attempt of what is a consequence of this task, the *destruction* of particular form and the *construction* of a rhythm of mutual relations, of mutual forms of free lines. (Mondrian 1987: 294)

Mondrian creates dynamic rhythm by juxtaposing opposites; thus he opposes construction and destruction, and the vertical and the horizontal, in an attempt to neutralise naturalistic space and object-hood, and to free a vital rhythm. Instead of being representative, that rhythmic, musical line is creative or form-giving.

In 'The New Plastic in Painting' (1917) [*De Nieuwe Beelding in de schilderkunst*], Mondrian discusses how modern man is turning away from the natural and how life is taking on a more "*determinate abstract* appearance" (1987: 28). That abstract is understood variously throughout the volume as an expression of the "universal" (41), as "spirit" (68), and as "vitality" (348). This move to abstraction is bound up with Mondrian's quest for the universal, for spirit, essence and for pure vitality, and he sees this as a move beyond the attachment to the static equilibrium of the external and of appearances.[8]

His task is to take painting from being an art of descriptive form and the punctual, representational line, to a new art of the universal and the plastic. The new art is, he says "the *determinate plastic expression of aesthetic relationships*" (1987: 28). This leads him to seek the plastic

[8] For reference to Mondrian's art as realizing the essence of life ["*le rhythme vivant*"], see: Jean-Claude Lebensztejn 'Mondrian, la fin de l'art', *Critique*, 39 (1983), 893–912, an article that is referenced by Reynolds (1995: 215). I have included this reference to essence because of Bergson's interest in essence as a virtual and as an event, as set out in *Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (1932). It is here that Bergson aligns essence with the musical, and implicitly with rhythm. As so clearly explained by Deleuze in *Bergsonism* (1966), Bergson talks about emotion as a pure element that is not represented and does not have an object (Deleuze 1966: 110). It has only an essence, a potential and intensity (*en puissance*) which traverses objects. For instance, the quality of emotion in a piece of music that expresses love depends on its essence, not on its object (love for a particular person). It is a creative emotion because it creates the work in which it is expressed and makes the music sing or cry. That essence is the event or virtual power of the music, it is sensation and affect. As such it is, like the Deleuzian Event in *What is Philosophy?*, a virtual that is real without being actual (1991: 156). Lebensztejn also picks up on the theme of dance rhythms in Mondrian.

structure of things rather than to depict the particularity of appearance, and to find pictorial relationships that resisted the closed line, the contour and individual form. That plastic structure is experienced, he believes, in the "dynamic rhythms of determinate mutual relations" and where art realizes those relations the universal can become visually perceptible without being tied to a particular form (295). For instance, Mondrian observes that, "the more we see the *relationship* of the colours, and the less we see the *individual colours*, the more we become *free of the particular and thus of tragic expression*" (86). Like colour, dimension and position are not regarded as attributes but as relations and those relationships assume a direct plastic expression that works beyond limiting form and defined representation. This expression affects energy and rhythm; as Mondrian puts it, "The action of plastic art is not space-expression but space-determination. Through equivalent oppositions of form and space, it manifests reality as pure vitality" (348).

Mondrian's association of the universal with pure vitality fits with his interest in theosophy and its mystical and utopian vision of the free spirit. It also fits with the colour theories of Goethe and of Steiner which treat colour as having an energy of its own that can be experienced independently of objects. But Mondrian's interest in vitality, and in matter as energy, also fit with the concept of *élan vital* and the equation of matter and energy made by his contemporary Bergson (1859–1951).[9]

It is this vitality which I come to read, after Deleuze and Guattari, and with Bergson in mind, as the virtual. As we shall see, this rhythmic vitality is a virtual which is rendered visible in the destruction of particular form, and which opens onto a very different space to that

[9] Mondrian (1872–1944)

striated space carved out by punctual lines. I argue that by freeing the line and setting up a musical, rhythmic relation of lines Mondrian constructs a smooth space—an acentred space with rhythmic rather than punctual values.

So, how does Mondrian achieve this? Mondrian's neo-plastic work is an exploration of space-determination or form-giving that depends on the vectorial line. As *Nieuwe Beelding*, literally "New Form-giving", his Neo-Plasticism is an abstract art that subverts the punctual system by inverting the dominance of point over line.[10] Rather than the submission of the line to the point, here the point submits to the line. But, this is more than a deconstructive reversal of formal geometry. Mondrian is concerned, not with formal issues of appearances and their relation to a closed conceptual and visual geometry, but with painting as a creative, plastic structure. An art of formation rather than form. Space-determination or form-giving is not a case of yet another analysis of the given condition of the picture and yet another

[10] Mondrian used the phrase *nieuwe beelding* in his first published essay of 1917 'The New Plastic in Painting' [*De Nieuwe Beelding inde schilderkunst*]. *Beelden* (vb) means form-giving or creation, *beeldend* plastic or image-forming (1987: 27). The distinction between expression and determination, and between construction and building, becomes clear in Klee's theory of form-building *Gestaltung*. Like Klee, whom I discuss in Chapter Five, Mondrian addresses form in the infinitive, as a theory of formation or form-giving and creation, not of form—in Dutch the verb *beelden* and its substantive *beelding*, which correspond to the German *Bildung*. Klee develops his own theory of formation as *Gestaltung* rather than *Formlehre*. As Mondrian himself notes, in German Neo-Plasticism [*De Nieuwe Beelding*] is translated as *Die neue Gestsaltung* (1987: 27). In English 'plastic' does not carry the same connotation of creation.

impression of the regulating norm ("space-expression"), but the invention and composition of a new synthesis of reality ("space-determination"). This is a move which means breaking with the (pre)determined form of the closed system and building the abstract, not because it isolates the determining condition of the picture, but because it is resolutely concrete in its refusal of the grounding point. Painting then moves from being a medium of representation and impression to a being a performative, operative and creative art. It becomes Abstract Expressionism.

If the line is form-giving it must be active, not submissive, open not closed. 'Line' here is a verb. 'To line' is 'to mark'. The line has modes. To mark: to stamp, to cut, to write, to trace; each line has a distinctive texture. It is musical because it is an articulation with rhythm and harmony. It resonates. It has modes of production, movements of construction and destruction, movements of territorialization and deterritorialization. To mark or to line distinguishes; it has a power as affect—speed, direction, deviation ... transformation. There is no formal construction, the expression of the line is its movement and its theme and variation. It is composition. But this composition is not the chromatic harmony of the melody or the concerto with its linear exposition and development. This is the complex interwoven motifs of the symphony, or the non-pulsed rhythms of jazz.

## *From Form to Composition*

The annihilation of form is clearly seen in Mondrian's early series of paintings of a single tree, a series that begins with the "tragic expression" of *The Red Tree* 1908, and ends with the clear dissolution of form in *Flowering Apple Tree* 1912 (fig. 3.4), a painting where the

dynamic rhythm of mutual relations can be clearly felt. In this series there is a clear progression from the particular to the general; from the definite, contoured appearance where the form appears as volume, planes and lines, and where the tree is a particular construction of space, to the reduction of form into a harmonious composition of curved lines across the canvas. Abstraction is thus understood as the destruction of form and the expression of a general or universal reality, and not as the representation of form in the abstract. However, this does not mean that abstraction is something vague, but rather that it works through concrete expressive means: colour and line, dimension and position. As Mondrian explains in a note of 1939 on Abstract Art:

> When volumes, planes, lines, remain intact, particularities are not abolished, the general expression of reality is not established. In order to do this, these means must be aneantisé [annihilated through] further abstraction until they become neutral forms or, by greater consequence, reduced to elements of form. (Mondrian 1987: 372)

In the 1908 tree painting *The Blue Tree* the tension between the centrifugal flowering of the branches of the tree and the centripetal pull of the central trunk is a balance that constructs the definite and static form. In an article of 1966 'A Tulip with White Leaves', Sylvester says that *The Blue Tree* 1908 demonstrates the urgency of growth and likens its spreading to a shellburst (1997: 132–36). However, in *Flowering Apple Tree* 1912 there is a dynamic equilibrium between the convex and the concave, and we see a first hint of the later grids in the tensing of some of the peripheral curves into straight horizontal and vertical lines. What is most striking about *Flowering Apple Tree* 1912 is that, despite a residual symmetry, the form of the tree is dissolved into a pattern of lines that spreads evenly right across the canvas, and

which denotes a general vitality rather than an individual existence.

In Mondrian's subsequent series *Pier and Ocean* and the 'plus-minus' compositions of 1914–17, some of which, like *Composition in Line and Colour (Windmill)* 1913 are explicitly and concretely entitled as "in line and colour" or "with colour planes", the grid pattern of lines becomes more obvious. In an essay of 1966, Sylvester wryly notes that an inward concentration persists in the seascapes as the ocean radiates from the vertical focus of a man-made projection, the pier (1997: 133). While this pictorial concentration effectively means that, as Sylvester puts it, "The ocean is not oceanic, consuming, illimitable", there is in fact no actual convergence on the pier. In *Pier and Ocean* 1914 or *Composition No. 10 (Pier and Ocean) 1915* (fig. 3.3) for example, the ocean radiates from the pier only to be checked by an enclosing oval.[11] The ebb and flow of the ocean is rendered in the pattern of pluses and minuses that set up a tension between centripetal and centrifugal forces that defies convergence, and the ocean shimmers across the canvas. Only two years later, in *Composition in Lines (Black and White)* 1916–17 (fig. 3.5), Mondrian eliminates both the pier and the framing oval line to create a shot of short vertical and horizontal lines where there are no contours, where particularity is abolished, and where only rhythm remains.

[11] The oval or circular 'frame' of the ocean in these paintings is not unlike the circles that Bacon uses to emphasis details of his studies, as seen for instance in, *Three Studies of Figures on Beds* 1972. Bacon was interested in X-ray images and the circles function similarly in that they are close-ups which isolate the image, or part of the image, from its space/time context. Mondrian's oceans could similarly be read as a drop of the ocean or as close-up images that distort the narrative frame of representational space.

Sylvester is an astute critic of Mondrian, and I agree with much of his analysis, not least because of his difference with Greenberg over whether Mondrian deals in shape or line. (Sylvester identifies the move from shape to line and thus to the open spaces of abstraction; Greenberg stays with shape.) However, I cannot agree with Sylvester's assessment that "In Mondrian figuration is equated with the centripetal, non-figuration with the centrifugal" (1997: 133). Sylvester maps these forces onto symmetry, seeing the figurative work—flowers, trees and the earlier seascapes—as symmetrical and the later grid work as non-symmetrical. However, as is clear from Mondrian's own writing, equilibrium is not a case of pictorial balance, but of intensity and the release of rhythm. What is important is not the move from the figurative and lines of nature to the non-figurative and lines "not matched in nature, lines proper to art", but the move from representation to abstraction; from the static equilibrium of particular form and the representational line, to dynamic equilibrium and the abstract musical line. The difference is precisely that while static equilibrium is defined, dynamic equilibrium opens onto the virtual rhythms of movement and change.

Where I think that Sylvester is right is in seeing that the contained energy of the "palpable oneness of the solitary flower or tower" in Mondrian's figurative work gives way to the "subliminal oneness of a vivid equilibrium" in the *Composition* work (Sylvester 1997: 136). I disagree however that that the 'oneness' of equilibrium implies a Modernist attachment to what is 'one with' or 'proper to art', as Sylvester suggests. We have here two very different models of oneness: the oneness of static unity and form, such as in Mondrian's chrysanthemums where energy and growth is checked by an enclosing centripetal force; and the complex oneness of a rhythmic and virtual multiplicity where the ocean or the composition is never still and never

defined.[12] I want to argue that the very indefinition of the ocean is real but virtual; it is a virtual multiplicity that works in the smooth space effected by the actual but abstract lines of the composition. Here the ocean is truly oceanic because it becomes acentred and without focus: a composition, not a form. As we shall see more explicitly with regard to Mondrian's grids, the "vivid equilibrium" of the virtual multiplicity is far from being a "subliminal oneness", it is in fact more than palpable (in the sense of being seen and thought). Like the emotion in music, this vivacity acts directly on the nervous system and 'hits you in the guts'; and thus it works as a disruptive, imaginary space, and an ontological transformation which challenges the tradition of painting with a new reality.

This new reality is signalled in what Sylvester calls Mondrian's "general revulsion against green and growth", but while Sylvester sees Mondrian replace the representational line that traces the growth of a tree in space with the straight lines that are proper to art, I propose that, in a move that takes him from particularity and the lived to the general, Mondrian is experimenting with a vitalist notion of life and of nature (Sylvester 1997: 133–34). This conception of life resonates with that of Deleuze, for whom life is—and here I use Daniel Smith's succinct phrase—"an impersonal and nonorganic power that goes

[12] Sylvester argues that the oneness of static equilibrium is compounded by Mondrian's insistence on painting in the singular: one flower, one building, one tree. There is some similarity here between Sylvester's critique of Mondrian and his critique of Bacon. The solitary figure is discussed in Sylvester's interview with Bacon in 1962 when Bacon makes the point that the single figure, as isolated in an armature or floated on a colour field, avoids the issue of narrative in the painting and concentrates the image (Sylvester 1975: 8–29).

beyond any lived experience" (Smith's introduction to Deleuze 1993b: xiv).

Reading life after Nietzsche's "will to power", Bergson's *élan vital*, and the work on variation and selection in the evolutionary biology of Darwin, in *Essays Critical and Clinical* (1993b) Deleuze develops a concept of life where life is expressive rather than functional. In explaining life in his introduction to that volume, Smith quotes Deleuze's commentary on Charles Dicken's *Our Mutual Friend* where the death of a rogue prompts Dickens to observe that "the spark of life within him is curiously separable from himself now" (Dickens 1864–5: 503). Smith comments that,

> The life of an individual has given way to an impersonal and yet singular life that disengages a pure event freed from the accidents of the inner and outer life, that is, from the subjectivity and objectivity of what happens. A *homo tantum* ... (Smith's introduction to Deleuze 1993b: xiii).[13]

The idea that in art the 'spark' or impetus of life (Bergson's *élan vital*) is somehow felt rather than understood is not uncommon. Sylvester admits that Mondrian's late work has, in natural light, a physical resonance: "In front of picture after picture there was a sort of draining, a giving up of self. The mind felt intent but empty and unfocused. It was the body that was focused" (1997: 436). Such a 'spark' is also key to the 'totally physiological sensation' that, in *Cinema 2*, Deleuze associates with the sublime and which is described as "shock" and as the "I FEEL" (Deleuze 1985: 158). A parallel sensation

[13] See also: Deleuze 'Immanence: A Life ...' (1995).

is identified by Bacon who strives to paint the immediate image that impacts onto the nervous system (Sylvester 1975: 104). Does perhaps Mondrian himself aim for the 'too much', that spark of the singular that goes beyond the objectivity of natural appearance to impact on the nervous system?

In his recent book *Germinal Life*, which centres on Deleuze's homage to Bergson, Keith Ansell Pearson summarizes this non-natural, nonorganic, germinal life as the expression of an "infinite substance", a force of life that accompanies but is not crossed by the intervention of external factors (Ansell Pearson 1999: 12). Read in such a way, Mondrian's move to the abstract line is not a rejection of nature but a decoding and deterritorialization of the body or object—the flower, the tree, or the ocean. Expressive not functional, line not shape; it renders the ocean oceanic.

Ansell Pearson is at pains to stress that non-organic life is not opposed to but accompanies the organic in a double articulation that is explained by Deleuze's introduction of "a 'musical' conception of nature" (1999: 210–11; my note 8 above). Understanding nature as musical or melodic allows Deleuze and Guattariin *What is Philosophy?* to understand art and nature as analogous, and as combining two living elements: "House and Universe, *Heimlich and Unheimlich*, territory and deterritorialization, finite melodic compounds and the great infinite plane of composition, the small and large refrain" (Deleuze and Guattari 1991: 186). In Mondrian's grids we see art as a twin movement of musical framing and unframing. The frame is not coordinated, but a structure that joins and holds up "determinate *melodic compounds*" of line and colour. But, this framing, or territorialization, does not just isolate the image as a complete picture, but opens onto the complex "*symphonic plane of composition*" (185). The

"external envelope" of the frame is traversed by the line that Mondrian forces beyond the frame—the infinite line—and the melodic compound that echoes that tight structure is deframed, delimited and taken apart by the line that leaves the canvas (187). The rigid construction of framed compounds gives way to the symphonic composition, and new affects are created, affects that work in the abstract smooth space of deframing. Lines escape the closure of punctual intersections. They combine, weave, play and dance to create a cacophony of sound and space: "an event freed from the accidents of the inner and outer life" and rendered visible in the double articulation of (de)-formation and composition (Smith's introduction in Deleuze 1993b: xiii).

## *Lines of Force*

I ended Chapter Two with a short discussion of the diagram, explaining it as a painterly concrete structure that sets up a virtual topology. I read the diagram as an agent of deformation, as a disruptive text that works against defined form, and that opens onto the virtual (which I see as a zone of indefinition and as a Deleuzian Event because it becomes an entity that maintains the compositional animation of the virtual multiplicity). I mentioned that that double structure is most clearly seen in the ascetic diagrams of Mondrian's grids, and I now want to elaborate that point in order to examine what is at stake in Deleuze's idea of the virtual as Event, and how it works.

Mondrian sets up a diagram using the formal opposition of strictly vertical and horizontal lines, a grid described by Deleuze as not so much a diagram as "a symbolic *code*" [*un* code *symbolique*] (1981a: 67). On the one hand this grid seems to adhere to a fixed Euclidean

geometry of point, line and shape, but when we look again we see novel, vibratory and vertiginous spaces that resist closure and maintain the animation of the virtual multiplicity. The tension is between an art of representation and an art of expression—of song and sensation.

In keeping with his assessment of Modernism as a concern with two-dimensional flatness, Greenberg conceives Mondrian's painting as the construction of space and an art of shapes—there are blue rectangles, red rectangles, yellow rectangles .... Sylvester disagrees instead sees Mondrian's grids as a composition of lines. In an article written in 1966 he observes that,

> A Mondrian does not consist of blue rectangles and red rectangles and yellow rectangles and white rectangles. It is conceived—as is abundantly clear from the unfinished canvases—in terms of lines—lines that can move with *the force of a thunderclap or the delicacy of a cat.* [my italics] (1997: 135)

For Sylvester a Mondrian involves lines that have force and delicacy; lines that, as we shall see in Mondrian's last canvases, carry the buzz of the city and the rhythms of jazz; lines that are musical; blazing lines that destroy the precious space 'proper to art' and which instead of referring to the point are defined only my the direction, speed and texture of their movement.

So, shape or lines? I want to argue that it is precisely Mondrian's strict adherence to the vertical and the horizontal shape or frame that opens up the 'crack' that enables him to dislocate shaped space, and from which the much more interesting "smooth space" of the *Composition* series and the *Boogie Woogie* pictures emerges; paintings

where the "utter abstractness" of the two-dimensional surface gives way to canvases that vibrate and dance, that are animated and musical.

It is the musical conception of philosophy, one that he owes chiefly to Bergson's conception of living beings as musical beings, that Deleuze returns to time and time again, not least in *What is Philosophy?* where, together with Guattari, he develops the idea of art as composition touched on above (1991: 191). What is notable in this musical conception, is the double articulation of the song where a rigid framing opens onto, even allows, the soaring variation. Take the example of the sonata (Deleuze and Guattari cite Liszt), which is a tightly structured and canonical form of theme and development (1991: 190). But, those themes or compounds of sound presented in the first movement explode into the variation of the second and third. The musician finds an opening in the theme that gives way to a much freer, deframed composition; the symphonic, the song, and the jazz that Mondrian was so fond of. But, what does it take to make lines sing? How does the double structure of the diagram work?

Deleuze describes the diagram in Mondrian as a "digital" code, but as he explains here digital does not mean manual but numeral (1981: 67). Digits are discrete units in a differential relation; each unit is distinctive but does not comprise a part or a greater whole.[14] In Mondrian's grids the vertical and horizontal lines remain discrete, they

[14] Leibniz's interpretation of the murmuring of the sea, and the differentiation of blue and yellow in the colour green also work as 'digital' differential relations. In green, yellow and green remain distinct and yet are obscure because they are not distinguished as separate parts. See: Deleuze 1968: 212–14. I discuss the differential relation in more detail in my chapter on Klee, Chapter Five.

never join up or change direction, never close on or determine a shape, are never punctuated and never conjugate on a point. They do not construct two-dimensional space. Using an image from Merleau-Ponty, we might say that the lines function like the woof and warp of the weave, simultaneous and successive but, unlike Merleau-Ponty's "a certain red" which I discussed in Chapter Two, Mondrian's lines never crystallize into a visible node but rush on weaving under and over each other (Merleau-Ponty 1964: 132). They have expression but no definition. They move with delicacy—in French *doigté*—or full of thunder.[15]

Under the asceticism of the straight line runs a scattered stream of digits which you have to get over in order to make shape cohere (and so see the canvas as a flat geometric composition, as Greenberg does, for instance), while the squares jump or float over that 'chaos'. There is a tension in the digital code between the structure and its destruction as the binary explodes into the giddy multiplicity of counts, dots and colours that vibrate in the indeterminate virtual depth of weaving lines. It is a dance that dazzles and excites the eye; a dance that gives 'life' to the movement of the free line and which functions as an Event in the Deleuzian sense because it keeps "the infinite movement to which it gives consistency" (1991: 156).

Mondrian's work is a double movement of framing and unframing; construction and destruction. The frame—the vertical and the horizontal form—is not so much coordinates as a structure which joins and holds up the "determinate *melodic compounds*" of line and

[15] The French offers an extra allusion here. As 'light touch', *doigté* is a play on Merleau-Ponty's theorization of the free line (as in Klee's musing line) as haptic rather than prosaic (1964: 183).

colour—the right-angled intersections, and the red, blue, yellow rectangles of Greenberg's conception. But, this framing, or in Deleuzean terms "territorialization", does not isolate the image as a complete and actualized picture, but opens onto the complex "*symphonic plane of composition*"—onto infinite lines and the virtuality of indefinite dimensions. The "external envelope" of the frame is traversed by the line of variation, and the melodic compound of the vertical and the horizontal is deframed and taken apart by the soaring line that leaves the canvas (Deleuze and Guattari 1991: 187). In the move from shape to line, lines escape the closure of punctual intersections to create a pictorial Event, a cacophony of visual noise with novel intersections and lines that combine, weave, play, and dance. New percepts, affects and sensations are created, ones that work in the abstract vectorial space of destruction.

## *1921: Composition and the Destruction of Space*

In keeping with Deleuze's own pragmatics, I intend to look at the image itself, the image as a system of relationships between its elements.[16] Certainly there is a rigid adherence to the vertical and the horizontal that echoes the frame; Sylvester and Greenberg agree on that, and despite Sylvester's emphasis on the line he reflects a

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[16] As I noted in my introduction, Deleuze calls his philosophy "pragmatics" because, in defiance of philosophy as a system of beliefs or propositions, it is not analytic or encyclopaedic, but aims to create new concepts and then to ask what new thinking those concepts allow (Deleuze and Guattari 1980: xv). Likewise, the affiliated pragmatics of art creates new percepts, affects and sensations. This project is the focus of *What is Philosophy?* and its "*pedagogy* of the concept" (Deleuze and Guattari 1991: 12).

Modernist sentiment when he talks about Mondrian's lines being proper to art: "... lines not matched in nature, lines proper to art, lines echoing the bounding lines of the canvas itself" (1997: 134). Strictly speaking though there is no frame to a Mondrian *Composition*, the frame has been brought into the picture and been put to work. The frame is a canonical form that holds up the melody of line and colour but there is also a play of line that is far more complex, intersections that are quite novel. There is both the creation of territory and the movements of deterritorialization. There is certainly some confusion about space. Even Greenberg has to admit that Mondrian produces "a *kind* of illusion of a *kind* of third dimension" (Greenberg 1993: 90). It seems that the picture is not so flat after all.

Take *Composition with Red, Yellow, Blue and Black* 1921 (fig. 3.6). Immediately the eye is drawn to the stark red square, to shape, and indeed this geometric shape is framed by straight vertical and horizontal black lines and secured by their intersection at the coordinating zero point, the right-angle. And yet, those lines are not contained by that stop, but go on. Nor are the lines cut off by the outside frame of the canvas. Encouraged by the blocks of colour, some travel on to the edge and beyond, others are cut short as if suspended. Lines intersect but, unstoppable, do not halt. It is as if Mondrian is painting a block of something much larger, something perhaps infinite. It is as if the canvas is the broken middle of a never-ending patchwork. Because of this, we have no idea of scale. Are the distances between lines human, cosmic or indefinable? Do the lines join to form two-dimensional shape, or remain one-dimensional? The problems are posed, never resolved. Each line has its own direction. Each is doggedly vertical; resolutely horizontal. But, are the lines flush with the canvas or floating above? Are they flat or undulating? Certainly they are in communication and yet they do not seem to

coordinate. There is a deliberate composition of the lines; a coming together or assemblage that makes the painting a composition and that gives it its distinctive mood. There are connections, conjunctions and disjunctions: connections, where there are relations and associations between lines that cross or cut across each other; conjunctions, where lines join, split or divide; and disjunctions, where lines run parallel and where each line is an exclusive drive to the infinite. These three techniques of composition make the lines work to produce a particular pattern and visual intensity and crack the geometry and symmetry of representation, creating quite a different space.[17]

The vertical and horizontal grid repeats the line of the conventional frame and echoes that rigid form of space where the line turns to construct the plane. But it only echoes in order to mock and to crack. The turn of the line does not open onto the neat two-dimensional plane of Greenberg's "utter abstractness", nor is it restricted by the picture's edge. Indeed the paintings are mounted on wood, as if on a plinth and as if precisely to avoid the boxing of the canvas. The viewer does not look into the frame, rather the painting extends into its surroundings and the lines shoot out beyond the frame and into the ether. The work does not admit the limitation of the plane, or construct an artificial or complete representational space but remains indefinite. Each digit remains discrete, and the work an open system. Like Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the concept, each work has components and is defined by them (1991: 15). It is a multiplicity and an entity only in so far as it is an aggregate or "combination" [*chiffre*] of

[17] See: Smith's introduction to Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical* (1993b). Smith explains connection, conjunction and disjunction as "three types of synthesis among singularities" (1993b: xxvii)

elements (15).[18] Composition is never a complete synthesis. Sylvester as much as admits this when he observes that "Mondrian wanted the infinite, and shape is finite"; so Sylvester conceives Mondrian's work in terms of lines—broken vectorial lines (Sylvester 1997: 135).

Instead of the ordered stability of geometric shapes, of intersecting lines and coloured rectangles, we have the digital disequilibrium of infinite, continuous lines. Instead of the representational model and its dependence on a space–time that is dominated and framed by the coordinating point, we have an expressionist model where a new space or depth emerges in the process of destruction. This is in effect a critique of the mechanistic model of space-expression and the metaphysics of product and presence. It raises the question of a metaphysics of process and an ontology that does not refer the line to the point. If art is to contribute to that project it is, as Mondrian says, "not the construction of space (form), but *the destruction of space* that abstract art requires" [my italics] (Mondrian 1987: 385). The destruction of space depends on the vectorial line, a line that opens up the punctual system by inverting the dominance of point over line. Rather than the submission of the line to the point that we see in framed territorial structures, here the point submits to the line. So, what about the free line? This is a line not effected by the point: a line that doesn't outline or shape, a line that doesn't conform to the simple axes and that doesn't evolve from, or return to, the principle of the point. What about the line that slips the frame to stand on its own, that has rhythm and, to quote Sylvester, "the force of a thunderclap or the delicacy of a cat" (1997: 135)?

[18] See also the translators' note in the English edition of *What is Philosophy?* (1994) in which "figure" and "numeral" are offered as alternative translations of *chiffre* (Deleuze and Guattari 1991: ix)

If we focus on the free line in such paintings as *Composition in Red, Yellow, Blue and Black* 1921 (fig. 3.6), we see that Mondrian frees the line from the point and finds lines that are 'proper to art', not because they conform to regulating norms, but because they are utterly concrete. Mondrian's free lines neither take their conception of space from the closed, arborescent system of representation, nor are limited to the restrictive geometry of abstract formalism. Instead, Mondrian's lines are abstract because they function within an 'open' rather than a 'closed' system, and point to a space of 'pure painting' that is beyond the frame.

### Composition and the Pure Landscape

Through the destruction of space, the diagram produces a new model and a different reality. It produces affects, percepts and sensations that are quite outside the reality of perception or opinion, quite unliveable and in that sense an effect that is vertigo or hallucination that refers only to the material of its execution. Rather than the delirium of vision that Merleau-Ponty sees in painting, we have the hallucinatory dance of the percept itself, rendered visible in the matter of the canvas, and therefore immaterial. We can now understand what Deleuze and Guattari mean when in *What is Philosophy?* they define the event as immaterial; "The event is immaterial, incorporeal, unlivable: pure *reserve*" (1991: 156).[19] This new reality does not depend on actualization but extracts new plastic landscapes from the rigidity and neat convergence of the lived.

[19] Deleuze and Guattari's capitalization of 'Event' in *What is Philosophy?* is inconsistent. Here they use a capital and the lower case within the same paragraph (1991: 156).

It is Cézanne who, as we saw in Chapter Two, is so often quoted as talking about "Man absent from but entirely within the landscape", as a way of understanding how the painter, seeing 'in fascination', creates a visible reality that usurps the structured distance of positivist perception with the topological depth of delirious vision (Deleuze and Guattari 1991: 169).[20] However, it is not Cézanne but Mondrian who, for Deleuze and Guattari, is the artist of the pure landscape, "a pure, absolutely deterritorialized landscape" (1980: 301). It is Mondrian who makes the pure animation of the landscape visible and constructs a real that is quite beyond the human, a real yet to come—an Event.

Here Deleuze and Guattari echo but rework Merleau-Ponty by understanding the work of art, not as recreating the "delirium which is vision itself" on the canvas and replicating the emergence of the landscape from virtually visible to actual, but as preserving the delirium of the virtual in the material—paint, colour, line—so that it is the material itself that passes into sensation and which is expressive (Merleau-Ponty 1964: 166). So we move from Merleau-Ponty, and Cézanne being immersed in the landscape, to the landscape as a percept and the painting as a site of the Event (Deleuze and Guattari 1991: 169). This is the landscape that is not measured, solid or fixed, but the nomadic tract that is acentred and unlimited. It is "any-space-

[20] Deleuze does not give a specific reference here. He may have Gasquet in mind. Gasquet remembers Cézanne as saying that when he reads Lucretius he feels as if he is "saturated by all the shades of the infinite" and merging with the earth. As morning comes he withdraws his eyes from the earth, gradually geological structures become clear, "red earth masses emerge from an abyss" and he begins to distance himself from the landscape, "to see it" (Gasquet 1921: 153–54).

whatever" (Deleuze 1983: 111). Perhaps, the land as land(e)scape; as ocean or as Sahara.[21]

Because, for Deleuze, it is not in the mechanism of perception but in the material of painting that the virtual is found, the task of the artist must be to experiment with that material. Far from liberating the phantom of the virtual within the actual, art raises the actual to the phantastic and works on the plane of composition. The modulation of colour against colour, and the patterns and constellations of the virtual world, are then *not a style which supports and gives character to* vision, but an expressive material entity. This consistent virtual is real without being actual. The phantom of the visible has cut its bond with perception and has become "inverse", and the work of art stands up by itself with its own logic of sensation. This is why, while both Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze talk about painting in terms of becoming, Merleau-Ponty says that "any theory of painting is a metaphysics", while for Deleuze painting is a materialism of the virtual, and its theorisation an ontology of the event (Ansell Pearson 2000: 2).

The deterritorialized zone, of the landscape or composition, is necessarily destratified. It is diagrammatic and functions as what in *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari call the "abstract machine" (1980: 141). The work of the abstract machine is not the hylomorphic action or mechanism of imposing form on matter, but the movement of matter itself. Hence its abstraction. However, as we see in the pure line and colour of Mondrian, matter is not an undifferentiated inert mass or an amorphous chaos, neither a "chaotic white night or an undifferentiated black night" but an explosion of digital movement and change (70). If we think of a Mondrian canvas as an abstract

[21] On the "Sahara" see: Chapter Two note 10, above. See also Deleuze 1981: 65 and Sylvester 1975: 56.

machine that works diagrammatically, we can see that there is no substance (formed matter) and no form of expression or form of content, just the movement of the discrete elements of matter. These elements—colour and line—operate as nothing but function and matter, matter being a substance that is physically unformed, and function being an expression not yet semiotically formed. Deleuze and Guattari can then say that, "A diagram has neither substance or form, content or expression", but is "pure Matter-Function" (141).

This makes sense in the light of the fact that Deleuze takes up Bergson's conception of matter as energy and light, and, when we look at how light and colour work, it is clear that matter is a differentiated multiplicity, and not inert or a chaos. Indeed, the movement of matter operates according to certain rules and those rules work to the logic of the differential, a logic that distinguishes the diagram as a complexity governed by rules of self-organization and inflection, rather than a chaos. As Deleuze and Guattari remind us in *A Thousand Plateaus* the diagram is not random but, because it is a zone of deterritorialization with its own rules of "plan(n)ing" (1980: 70). The diagram shows up this movement of matter, and it is this virtual materialism that is seen in Mondrian's destruction of space. The virtual is a dazzling, dizzying plane of patterns and rhythm.[22]

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[22] Mondrian's experiments with the rigid diagram are continued in the work of Bridget Riley. Riley literally makes a diagram by mapping out her work on graph paper. Her absolute precision produces the most dazzling spaces, spaces that are not chaotic but which form regular patterns; waves, vortexes, lines that pleat .... These rhythms strangely echo the patterns of chaos found in the Mandelbrot set, in the flow of viscous fluids, or in the strange chaotic harmonies that result when different rhythms (radio frequencies or planetary orbits) collide. See: James Gleik *Chaos* (1988), which includes computer generated illustrations of these 'chaotic' patterns.

## ***1937: Composition and the Phantastic Space of the Event.***

The destruction of space is particularly obvious in the last of Mondrian's *Compositions*, such as *Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue* 1937–42 (fig. 3.7), where the grids are predominantly black and white. The paring down of the picture to a linear grid, with peripheral patches of colour, serves to emphasize the painting as a composition of broken lines. Indeed, as Mondrian's series of *Compositions* develops, even the coloured shapes begin to be reduced to lines; short and straight; red, blue, and yellow lines are dotted about; lines which perhaps, as Sylvester suggests, herald the broken, fragmented lines of Mondrian's last work, the *Boogie Woogie* jazz variations; lines which, freed from the point, have an autonomy which makes them "less referential, more and more musical" (1997: 433).

The non-symmetrical and irregular metre creates a quite hallucinatory effect of jumpy lines and there is an unsettling *staccato* that breaks up the lines within the picture. Connections between the lines are hesitant and that vibration produces a spark—the grey point—that takes over the inbetween.[23] Grey dots flash, filling the interval, an interval that is then not a punctuation or an abyssal gap, but bursting with life. Like the musical *fermata*, this crack is a pregnant

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[23] Dee Reynolds recognizes this movement as the lines themselves appearing to expand and dilate. She calls them "optical flickers" (Reynolds 1995: 183). The tumultuous grey point of indetermination also occurs in Klee as the pictorial symbol of the non-concept, a mathematical point of non-opposition between dimensions. Both black and white but neither, it is the point where all colours exist simultaneously. (Klee 1956: 3). I discuss the 'chaos' of the grey point in Chapter Five.

pause, a vibratory quietude that erupts into a blazing tumult.[24] The effect is quite beyond the vertical and the horizontal, but it is an expression that emerges from that functional norm.

The painting is not fixed and there is no determined or determinable appearance, each line is a vector dancing across an ambiguous, fluid space of indefinite dimensions. Sylvester calls it "an illusory space", like Greenberg before him, but with Merleau-Ponty in mind, I prefer to think of it as a phantastic space, or as Reynolds does, "imaginary space" (Sylvester 1997: 436; Reynolds 1995: 23). In any case it is a topological space which extends above, below and beyond the canvas. Shallow, and of infinite depth; it is the Deleuzian "any-space-whatever" [*espace quelconque*] (Deleuze 1983: 111–122). It operates on the plane of composition and the work is a gathering together, even a phantasmagoria (from Greek *phantazein*: to gather together, to make visible, to see and not to recognize). These weaving, hovering, undulating, animate lines work in indefinite space to create a fantastic pictorial other dimension and give an indefinite depth to the work which vibrates between one, two and three dimensions … or is it more? In the *Composition* series of the 1920s, and the subsequent *New York City* and *Boogie Woogie* paintings, there is a coexistence of multiple dimensions where the line is "space-giving" not "space (form)-dividing", "space determination" not "space expression"—*Nieuwe Beelding* or Neo-Plastic art.

There seems to be a certain irony in Mondrian's rigid deployment of the vertical and the horizontal line freeing the line from the convergent point. But in fact, Deleuze and Guattari's own definition of

[24] Thanks go to Dr. Rachel Jones (University of Dundee) for suggesting the image of the *fermata*.

the broken middle, or line-block, is that it "no longer has vertical and horizontal coordinates" but is non-pulsed, and they evoke the diagonal as a "line of separation" which transverses and thwarts localizable connections and submission to the point. (1980: 296, 186). Compositional and choreographical, rather than mechanically geometric, the space in these paintings emerges from the movement of the line. The lines deviate, go off the point. They are a composition, a creation and a dance. The system functions inventively and the referential and reverential dead line of punctuality is usurped by variation and the abstract and active musical line, a vector which can be both the mathematical diagonal process and the more literal oblique line.

By insisting so rigidly on the vertical and the horizontal, Mondrian implicitly produces the diagonal, an undrawn and perhaps even unsought line of separation, that cut across the grid and which further disrupts any apparent coordination. This is evident in the virtual diagonal that, prompted by the vertical and the horizontal lines, runs obliquely across the canvas, and in the more complex diagonal process which produces an *n*th variation and which we see in the dazzling intersections of *Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue* 1937–42 (fig. 3.7). Both defy submission to the point. Both are a transversal movement virtual to the apparent calm of the vertical and horizontal axis.

The diagonal is a Deleuzean "dynamic axis", or line of flight [*ligne de fuite*], a line which belongs only to the interval or 'crack' between the vertical and the horizontal (Deleuze and Guattari 1980: 298, 546 note 89). The diagonal is not an individuation within pictorial norms but a singularity quite beyond that punctuality, and, I suggest, a 'crack' that pushes our conceptualization of the picture beyond its regulating norms. We see this in Mondrian's compositions, and indeed it is to

Mondrian that Deleuze and Guattari turn to as an example of how the frame self-destructs and the line becomes mobile.

They recognize yet another stage in the move to pure colour and line in the lozenge paintings where Mondrian finally releases the diagonal by the simple inversion of the square, producing in the lozenge that Deleuze and Guattari call Mondrian's "perfect square" (305). Mondrian's own analysis is that he sets up a balance between opposites—the vertical and the horizontal—*to create an equilibrium* and to destroy by neutralisation through mutual opposition; "by plastically expressing *relationships* which change each opposite into the other" (Mondrian 1987: 40). He aims to counteract conceptual form and to create what Reynolds calls a "living rhythm" (Reynolds 1995: 178).

In order to resist any sense that this diagonal is a superficial optical illusion, Reynolds insists that it is a pictorial "imaginary space". As she argues, here in reference to Kandinsky, the pictorial imaginary space perverts space–time and is not representational. Seeing the picture plane vibrate, she perceptively argues that it must be a system not a structure, and she describes the rhythm that is set up between the pictorial and the imaginary space in terms of the Peircean diagram. In a section headed 'Imagining the Future' she explains that what is crucial to the diagram is that it is a system of relationships that provokes new way of thinking, and that new reality is derived from the sensory (or more accurately a "sensory unreality") and the material, and not from abstract and conceptual thought (Reynolds 1995: 3 note 5, 216). The painting, she says, "is not 'imaginary' unless it negates itself by exceeding its own powers of presentation, suggesting more that it can explain or make visible" (3). So though with her Kantian background Reynolds aligns the work of imaginary space with the experience of the

sublime and a positive excess to conceptual definition, and although she thus keeps hold of the role of the viewer and a productive "imagining activity", it is clear that it is the painting itself that is disruptive and which functions, not as "an object of reference" but as "an object of imaginary transformation" (8, 3).

In identifying the work of art as an "event" in the sense that it goes beyond the power of conceptual presentation, Reynolds attempts to escape both the notion of art as a recognizable object and the Modernist ideal of self-referentiality (Reynolds 1995: 23). Her concept of event is therefore close to the Deleuzian Event as set out in *What is Philosophy?* because it remains an open system that disrupts the standard language. According to Reynolds, the content of the painting "consists, not in ideas which can be defined in conceptual terms, but rather in an *event*" (my italics) (23). She understands the painting itself as a stimulus to imaginary activity, and "imaginary space" as an effect of the painting that, because it fissures the coherence of the work, goes beyond definition and the signifying process (23). In hanging onto the idea that the painting undergoes an ontological transformation by being experienced as a site of imaginary space Reynolds limits the task of painting to the disruption and provocation of thought, and does not push the painting itself as a production and invention of new sensations.[25] However when it comes to Mondrian, she does

[25] Reynold's works through Theodor Lipp's theory of *Einfühlung* to develop her notion of imagining activity as a relation of empathy with the object of perception. Like the painter's fascination and the immersion in the visible that Merleau-Ponty talks about in his 'Eye and Mind' essay, Lipp's notion of *Einfühlung* touches the quality of colour, its "dynamic potential" (*Kraft*) and mood (*Stimmung*), and like Cézanne he describes that energy as a direct experience (*unmittelbar*) belonging to the colour itself. Reynold's chooses to use Lipp because he understands *Einfühlung* as a pleasurable aesthetic

acknowledge Mondrian's view that his painting was a preparation for a Neo-plastic architecture—"we will live in realised art"—as a Utopian vision, and she goes on to recognize that "the crucial issue for Mondrian's aesthetic, as for Kandinsky's, is the ontological status of the pictorial space" (Mondrian 1987: 340, 344; Reynolds 1995: 157).

Because the lines in Mondrian's grids are active rather than ordered, they raise the question of the ontological status of the painting, and that of the logic of the line when it is pushed beyond representational structure. Mondrian achieves his equilibrium not by flattening, fixing and subduing the vertical and the horizontal, but by syncopation, modulation and variation; that is by rhythm and movement and a refusal of the fixed opposition of the punctual system. The "network of intersecting rhythms" that Reynolds sees in Kandinsky is equally appropriate to Mondrian (1995: 139). By developing a multilinearity in which the horizontal and vertical lines interweave and defy closure, Mondrian goes further than juxtaposing opposites within a system and goes on to create the counter-punctual and diagonal event of the phantastic, imaginary space. These intersecting rhythms are clearly seen in Mondrian's *New York City* series where blue, red and yellow lines race across the canvas and off in a multi-layered grid of straight lines, like a street map of New York, or the trails of car lights in a photograph of traffic at night. Blazing lines hurtling across the city.

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contemplation, and she contrasts this with the pain entailed in Kant's experience of the sublime (22). However, I think that she could have made her point about the empathetic relation with the work of art as a way of enacting pictorial rhythms and experiencing imaginary space equally well through Merleau-Ponty.

### *1941: New York and the Rhythms of Jazz.*

The lines of Mondrian's *New York City* 1941 (fig. 3.8) clearly do not represent but construct a new type of reality, a hallucinatory reality of pure sensation. The city is distinguished by the dynamic of the lines: by movement and rest, speed and slowness, by lines of force or delicacy of a cat". Its reality is not a spatio–temporal relation but involves multiplicity, and its identity is an assemblage or composition of its material elements and their differential speeds. The composition is consistent but never stilled and never silent. It is material and energic. More a commotion than a chaos. Never a state of affairs. This is exactly what Deleuze and Guattari call the Event; a virtual that has become consistent but which is distinct from the actual because it keeps "the infinite movement to which it gives consistency" (Deleuze and Guattari1991: 156). It has absolute quiddity as a singular entity that refers only to the intensity of matter and movement, and which therefore has no representational identity. Its expression and content are an effect of that diagrammatic conjunction.

As we see, in painting the diagram is "an operative composition" [*l'ensemble opératoire*] and produces new percepts, affects and sensations (Deleuze 1981: 66). This is *New York City* 1941. It is a name that designates a colour or intensity (Deleuze and Guattari 1980: 142). Like Virginia Woolf's London landscape, which Deleuze and Guattari discuss in the plateau '1730: Becoming-intense …' it is vertiginous but absolutely specific, a haecceity. "A haecceity has neither beginning nor end, origin nor destination; it is always in the middle. It is not made of points, only of lines" (1980: 263).

London or New York, the landscape has its own inimitable style. Fog or glare. The rush of tail-lights, or the buzz of the crowd. *New*

*York City* has its own distinctive rhythms. What we see in the commotion of colouring lines is not the irregularity of chaos but a coherent behaviour from which a certain content and expression are extracted. A certain rush. Like turbulence. There is a parallel here between the turbulence which Mondrian effects and the science of non-linear thermodynamics as set out in the work of Gleik (1988), and Prigogine and Stengers (1979), scientists who rework chaos as a self-organizing complexity.

In *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari reference Gleik whose book *Chaos* (1988) includes a useful discussion of turbulence (Deleuze and Guattari 1991: 156 notes 14 and 16: Gleik 1988: 121–25). Turbulence is also discussed by Prigogine and Stengers in *Order out of Chaos*, surely work known to Deleuze and Guattari who reference their later work (Deleuze and Guattari 1991: 118 note 1). Both Gleik, and Pigogine and Stengers argue that even the predictable behaviour of stable systems can fluctuate (Prigogine and Stengers 1979: 140–45, 167). The, so called, stationary state is not inert but may react to thermodynamic forces acting on the system or to fluctuation produced by the system or its environment. This instability may then be amplified and cause the system to become far from equilibrium. Indeed the fluctuations may affect the entire system and push it into a chaotic state where the linear is exceeded by a qualitatively quite different, new reality, the non-linear, and quite different, turbulent, behaviours ensue.

As Prigogine and Stengers are quick to point out, although these new behaviours appear to be chaotic on the human or macroscopic level, they are in fact highly organized. Patterns and rhythms emerge: waves, convection currents, and oscillations; all of which involve multiple space–time scales and owes more to fluid dynamics than the

science of solids. Their behaviour corresponds to that of fluid systems, like light, energy and indeed matter itself.

This move to turbulence is surely not unlike the delirious movement of the new reality that Mondrian effects when he strains the vertical and the horizontal axis. The formal geometry breaks and gives way to the explosive destruction of space. Patterns dissipate across the canvas and waves of turbulent undulating lines speed on. There is the distinctive but indecisive murmur of the freeway, and the dissonant buzz of the city. Mondrian composes the *New York City* pieces by pinning coloured strips of paper to the canvas; strips that still adhere to the unfinished *New York City II* (unfinished) c.1942 and *New York City III* c.1942, studies in oil and tape. The effect of the irregular beat and complex weave create an unfathomable, orgiastic depth, and when seen against the neutral bare beige canvas the lines appear like a mesh curtain or web of strings hanging in cosmic space. The real disintegrates before our eyes and, like the noise of city traffic, distance and direction are distinct but obscurely indefinite.

By taking that most basic of geometrical forms, the straight line, towards infinity and fracturing the rigid two-dimensional plane, Mondrian destroys the condition of the picture and subordinates the point to the line. His radical linearity takes punctual geometry to breaking point as the insistence on the straight and infinite line, without intersection or deviation, inevitably defies the flatness of abstraction. Freed from its submission to the point, the line has no measure only direction, speed and slowness, force and delicacy. Who can tell in what dimension it moves? Without defining points the depth and distances in this open weave of lines are imperceptible, they could be cosmic or minute—or variable. It seems that when taken to its limit the punctual system is fractured and goes into reverse

[*renverser*]. As Deleuze and Guattari maintain, "One elaborates a punctual system or a didactic system, but with the aim of making it snap, or sending a tremor through it" (1980: 295). This is surely Mondrian's great achievement: the destruction of space. But, he goes on to create even more daring work, work that not only dazzles the eye but which hits the nervous system and which physically hurts—like jazz.

The fragmentation of the line into line-blocks, in the *Boogie Woogie* paintings, *Broadway Boogie Woogie* 1942–3 and *Victory Boogie-Woogie* 1943–44 (unfinished) (fig. 3.9) is the final breakthrough to painting a multiplicity that is open to myriad compositions. If jazz is, as Sylvester defines it, "a form of music in which every piece is a variation", then this is jazz (1997: 435). Each painting is an ensemble or set of variations, an improvisation worked out using coloured confetti so that the piece is literally provisional, transferable and infinitely variable, in process. Plastic art. Paper art. It is perhaps not accidental that *Victory Boogie-Woogie* 1943–44 (unfinished) remains exactly that, interrupted and unfinished.

The perfect square of the lozenge likewise sets up the painting as somehow on the cusp of change, as if tradition has been spun round and all sense of perspective lost as if it is in suspension, waiting to be whirled round again. But, it is not just the experimental state of the work or the oblique-angled canvas that is bewildering, the lines themselves also escape, even fly from, definition. In the *Boogie Woogie* paintings the line is a chain of colour-blocks that compose a complex line and a complex pattern. It is as if the dazzling interval or point that we see in the *Composition* series has exploded into a kaleidoscope of coloured pieces. What was fluid is now gaseous. The line is already a broken line, made up of fragment, tiny coloured blocks. It never

existed as a whole measured by its distance between points. but is always already a series of non-localizable blocks. Like musical notes. Like digits. Any definition is tested to the limit; where are the coordinates, where are the right-angles that open onto the plane, where is the beginning and the end?

Mondrian has pushed the geometry of the line beyond the threshold of stability and, far from equilibrium, the closed system tremors and the interplay between the vertical and the horizontal bursts into infinite lines and indefinite depths. Absolutely unregulated. Utterly abstract. The work of art exists in itself. The blazing line is always becoming, fragmenting and (re)assembling. It is molecular and it proliferates, each colour-point the point of a novel intersection and a new departure; but the intensity of the point is maintained in the line, because "it is now the point that has become subordinated to the line, the point now marks the proliferation of the line, or its sudden deviation, its acceleration, its slowdown, its furore, its agony" (1980: 297). It has become abstract, like Deleuze and Guattari's "line of flight": "the line has become abstract, truly abstract and mutant, a visual block: and under these conditions the point assumes creative functions again, as a colour-point, or line-point" (298).

Boogie Woogie is jazz; non-pulsed time and a beat–off-beat rhythm. *Victory Boogie-Woogie*—this is 1944 and Mondrian had left Holland, and Europe on the brink of war, for London and then New York in 1937—is taking a walk, dancing, dreaming. This is life. Dancing a *Boogie Woogie* the sorcerer Mondrian is testing the system and breaking away; he is experimenting and inventing, taking the line and making it dance. He is extracting the event of painting. To boogie-woogie, to dance ... devilishly good.

# CHAPTER 4

# JACKSON POLLOCK

## Catastrophic Landscapes and Unframed Space



(fig 4.1) Pollock, *Summertime* (*Number 9*) 1949 (section)



(fig 4.2) Pollock, *Blue Poles* (*Number 11*) 1950 (section)



(fig. 4.3) Pollock, *Number 7* 1952



(fig 4.4) Turner, *Snow Storm: Steam-boat off a Harbour's Mouth* 1842



(fig 4.5) Pollock, *Moon Woman Cuts the Circle* 1942



(fig 4.6) Pollock, *Eyes in the Heat* 1946

> *Abstract painting is abstract. It confronts you. There was a reviewer a while back who wrote that my pictures didn't have any beginning or any end. He didn't mean it as a compliment, but it was. It was a fine compliment.*
>
> Jackson Pollock, *New Yorker* 1950 (O'Connor 1967: 51)

## *'Iridescent Chaos'*

No beginning and no end. This is indeed a fine compliment because it acknowledges the abstract lines and the unframed smooth spaces of Jackson Pollock's painting. The famous "all-over" canvases, like *Summertime* (*Number 9*) 1948 (fig. 4.1), *Lavender Mist* (*Number 1*) 1950 and *Blue Poles* (*Number 11*) 1952 (fig. 4.2), are a tumult of colour and line that resists the confinement of either an external frame or internal reference points. Pollock's line is the abstract line, not the line that runs from point to point but the transversal line that run between [*entre*] points and that defies the contour. It is described by Deleuze variously: in *Francis Bacon: Logique de la sensation* it is gothic [*«ligne gothique»*] and northern [*septentrionale*] (1981a: 68); in *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* it is Baroque and "the line with infinite inflection" (1993a: 27); and in *A Thousand Plateaus* the abstract line is defined with a specific reference to Michael Fried's assessment of Pollock's work as:

> multidirectional, with neither inside nor outside, form nor background, delimiting nothing, describing no contour, passing between spots or points, filling a smooth space, stirring up a close-lying haptic visual matter that "both invites the act of seeing on the part of the spectator yet gives his eye nowhere to rest once and for all," (*Three*

> *American Painters* [Cambridge, Mass.: Fogg Art Museum, 1965], p. 14]. (Deleuze and Guattari 1980: 499 note 38)

Here Deleuze and Guattari make three key observations about the work: the characteristics of the abstract line are seen as "describing no contour", the smooth space is understood as "haptic visual matter" and as disorientating the eye of the spectator. With these points in mind, my own reading of Pollock's work is that, in the move to manual art or action art, it takes the ontology of painting beyond Mondrian's destruction of space, and confronts the material, energic element of painting as an event. In Pollock painting becomes an art of expressive matter, which in performance produces a form of expression 'without image'—the Event. What we find in the work are the conditions that make that Event possible: the return to the manual, and the chaotic multiplicity of, what Deleuze calls, "stroke-lines" [*trait-ligne*] and "colour-patches" [*tache-couleur*] and their free correlation (Deleuze 1981a: 68).

Like Mondrian, Pollock executes an optical catastrophe and, like Mondrian, his colour and line function as a diagram, an operative group of traits and marks that works at the level of the material, through the relation between elements. But whereas, in his grids, Mondrian cracks the restrained digital diagram to effect a destruction or *déformation* of space, in Pollock the optical is overtaken by the peculiar material and heterogeneous "abyss or chaos" [*l'abîme ou le chaos*] of the abstract line, that is the line that does not contour or delimit (Deleuze 1981a: 68). This produces the unsettling visual impact of Pollock's work mentioned by Fried, and the dazzling, disorienting effect that I first identified in Mondrian's late work, the *Boogie Woogie* paintings, where the line explodes into molecular points and vibrates with the blazing rhythms of jazz (Fried 1965). What I argue here is that this chaotic fragmentation is more than destruction or deformation

[*déformation*]; it is a dissolution or decomposition of form and a movement of counter-actualization. This dissolutive chaos does not however mean dereliction but the different, abstract process of formation "without image", something made clear by Guattari in his own study of a creative aesthetic paradigm *Chaosmosis* (1992) where he coins the term chaosmosis, a word that puts an affirmative spin on chaos by embracing the notion of an event-centred and "processual creativity", and of a "machinic autopoiesis" (Guattari 1992: 7, 13).

In *Chaosmosis* (1992) Guattari reworks the autopoietic as a machinic assemblage that synthesises heterogeneous elements and that is open to virtual change, hence the term "machinic autopoiesis". In *Germinal Life* (1999) Ansell Pearson usefully explains Guattari's development of "machinic autopoiesis" as a "machinic heterogenesis" (Ansell Pearson 1999: 168–170). This is to distinguish the autopoietic entity that functions as a unitary, individuated and closed system of self-organization, from the open and creative evolution or autogenesis that Guattari demands of the aesthetic paradigm.[1]

Guattari conceives the diagram as an autopoietic machine, a development of Peirce's own description of the diagram as an "icon of relation" (1992: 44). This understanding of the diagram as autopoietic requires it to maintain a "functional and material consistency", while being machinic demands that it be an open system in which components are mobile and can move in and out, make novel

[1] "Autopoiesis," Guattari says, "deserves to be rethought in terms of evolutionary, collective entities, which maintain diverse types of relations of alterity, rather than being implacably closed in on themselves" (1992: 39–40). To explain this, Guattari gives the example of a wall (42). A heap of stones is a collection of parts, but a wall is a heterogeneous collective entity without a delimited unitary individuation. The wall is a molecular construct that depends on the tensions between inside and outside, and left and right.

connections or mutate, thus "freeing it from an identity locked into simple structural relations" (44). Guattari's rethinking of the diagram refines the notion of the diagram as an abstract machine delineated in *A Thousand Plateaus* by emphasising that it is not only an operative that constructs a new type of reality free from the constraints of punctual identity, but a system concerned with the molecular construction of material composition and its virtual tensions, and which undermines individuated structural relations (Deleuze and Guattari 1980: 142). He calls it a "machinic heterogenesis" (1992: 33–57).

The burst of colour and line that we see in Pollock's canvases is, similarly, not just operative but cataclysmic. In his own short discussion of Pollock in *Francis Bacon: Logique de la sensation* (1981a) Deleuze talks about the painting becoming a unity of catastrophe and diagram, "*une peinture-catastrophe et une peinture-diagramme*" (1981a: 68). Key to this conjunction of catastrophe and the diagram is the notion of counter-actualization. Pollock's work is a fine example of painting that works as a mode of counter-actualization because it stays with the diagram and works only as a composition—as a performative whirl of colour and line. In the catastrophe the landscape of painting is radically changed; the framework of the canvas 'proper to art' is blown apart and with it the order of space crucial to actual formation; nothing is delimited and the eye has nowhere to rest. Pollock's lines and splodges, strokes and marks are abstract lines that work on the plane of composition. Defined by their free movement they function like gaseous particles, molecular units that erupt as distinctive "linear features" [*linéaments*] and "fragments" [*granulations*] distributed across the smooth spaces of the pure landscape—the ocean or the West—a distribution with "no beginning and no end", and where actualization is actively resisted because the painting stays with the free movement and change of the diagram (Deleuze 1981a: 68).

This radical catastrophe moves painting beyond Merleau-Ponty's problematic of the depth of the visible, and takes the question of the virtual from that concern with perception and the optical to the question of the manual and the vitality of matter and material. But this is not just a problem of rendering visible the virtual composition immanent to the actual—as in the optical catastrophe of dazzle—but of working on the level or plane of composition, and therefore of extracting a rather different virtual. This is the virtual that Deleuze and Guattari identify in *What is Philosophy?* (1991) as distinct from the actual, the virtual that is no longer chaotic but "that has become consistent on the plane of immanence" (plane of composition) (1991: 156). Being distinct from the actual, the Event [*Événement*] is a change of state, another world (156 [147]). Deleuze and Guattari describe it as a "completely different reality where we no longer have to search for what takes place from one point to another, from one instant to another, because virtuality goes beyond any possible functions" (157). For Deleuze and Guattari, the identification of this distinctive virtual marks the move to abstraction and he argues that while the Modern renders visible or—in the light of his inversion of Merleau-Ponty's reading of Cézanne—extracts the virtually visible, abstraction discovers the vital rhythm of matter and material (68). Hence his concept of a virtual, and vital materialism.

In the plateau 'The Geology of Morals', in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), Deleuze and Guattari set out a theory of organization—they call it "coding" or "territorialization"—based on the work of Danish Spinozist geologist Louis Hjelmslev (Deleuze and Guattari 1980: 40–45). This is a liquid system, which maps onto the model of the virtual–actual circuit. The importance of this model is that it breaks down the duality of content and expression, form and substance that are characteristic of systems of representation in favour of flows of matter. Instead of the top down imposition of form on matter, Deleuze and

Guattari offer a geological model of sedimentation that sees flows of matter thickening into stable strata, a movement from a 'chaotic' virtual to the actual.

This model sets up a complex net of matter, content and expression, form and substance whereby, in a double articulation of sedimentation and folding, order and stable structures emerge. Briefly, the distinction between the articulations is not between form and substance, but between content and expression: a fluid process of selection and ordering is the first articulation—the substance and form of content; and in the second articulation—expression—structures and compounds are established as intersections become stable. The articulations are not separate; content is just as much substance as content, and content just as much form as expression" (Deleuze and Guattari 1980: 44). This geological model breaks down the dualities content and expression, form and substance, and keeps hold of the idea of organization as a material process. However, it is not a matter of essentials, of solids and constants, but of spontaneity, fluidity and movement, and of cracks, upheavals and tremors. Of action, and of style.

Hjemslev's geological model prompts a theorization of the virtual–actual circuit as a fluid system akin to geological sedimentation. For example, the virtual–actual relation—as explored by Merleau-Ponty in his commentary on the painter's vision as "fascination" in the 'Eye and Mind' essay—sees the actual landscape drawn out of an amorphous virtual murmur of colour in a double articulation where content and expression emerge together (Merleau-Ponty 1961: 167).

However, the explosion—the dissolution and decomposition of form—that is the "all-over" canvas has a radical implication for the status of the virtual. As we saw in the last chapter, Mondrian makes a

radical reversal of that movement of actualization in his *Composition* series; thus effecting a counter-actualization. In a movement from actual to virtual, he cracks the punctuality of the line to reveal the dazzling smooth spaces of abstraction. He then goes on to work on that plane, and to extract the virtual in the blazing abstract lines of the *Boogie-Woogie* work, lines that, with their perpetual movement work counter actualization. In this work there is no easy flow from the virtual to the actual—as there is in Cézanne's middle period and paintings such as *Montagne Sainte-Victoire* 1896 (fig. 2.1)—and no closure or "territorialization". Instead it is the virtual that becomes an entity, and which is in effect both content and expression.

Pollock continues that work of counter-actualization and, I suggest, forces a change of state from the easy liquid flows of the virtual–actual circuit to a different order of existence in the free movement and gaseous state of the virtual that stands on its own as an Event on the canvas. This is to enter the non-punctual world of the transversal and the abstract line that is multidirectional, with neither inside or outside, form or background, beginning or end.

Deleuze explores the gaseous state in *Cinema 1* (1983), in reference to Soviet film-maker Dziga Vertov's technique of montage, but this technique is not exclusive to the cinema (1983: 80–86). As I will argue later in this chapter, I see the gaseous at work in Pollock. In Pollock, as in Vertov, the image of liquid flows is inadequate. It is not an optical movement that confronts us in Pollock, but the "material, energic element" of movement (Deleuze 1983: 84). Deleuze sees this decomposition as the extraction of particles of matter, and likens it to the explosive texture of Seurat's *pointilliste* painting (85). It is the modulation and the "iridescent chaos" of the Cézannian world before man (81). Pollock is certainly not concerned with optical construction, such as the Cubist illusion of space, or the Cézannian depth of

visibility that I discussed in the light of Merleau-Ponty's concern with the perceptual move from the virtual to the actual.

In the same way that Greenberg reads Mondrian as a quintessential Modernist, he finds that in Pollock "a set of more or less familiar conventions continues to operate" (Greenberg 1993: 110). He understands Pollock as continuing the Cubist concern with an illusionary optical space, and he judges the success of Pollock's work by the "dramatic and pictorial unity" of the patterns of colour, shape and line that he effects within that illusion of depth. In his opinion Pollock's painting of 1941–46 continues the "ornamental patterns and heavy, cursive lines" of Picasso's Late Cubism of the 1930s, and the paintings of 1947–50 develop the facet-planes of Analytic Cubism, typified by the mono-chromatic Cubism of Braque and Picasso (1910–12): "The interstitial spots and areas left by Pollock's webs of paint answers Picasso's and Braque's original facet planes, and create an analogously ambiguous illusion of shallow depth" (110).

Greenberg's interpretation of Pollock sits in marked contrast with a more radical reading which is informed by Deleuze and Guattari's comments on Cézanne, an artist of "*close vision–haptic space*"—a world before man (1980: 493). In my understanding of Pollock as a painter of the pure landscape, I want to push the notion of the landscape further than I did in the last chapter, where I explained it as an acentred, unlimited smooth space. Here I explore the pure landscape as a "*close vision–haptic space*" and argue that, whereas Mondrian plays with an optical *déformation* that opens onto smooth space, Pollock's insistence on painting as a manual art—"action painting"—means the catastrophe of the optical, and the landscape as an Event that is inseparable from the movement, rhythms and textures of its material genesis and composition.

## *Action Painting*

In an article for *Vogue* in 1967, entitled 'Jackson Pollock: "Inspiration, Vision, Intuitive Decision"', Greenberg notes that Pollock was not as interested in making theoretical points as Mondrian was. He goes on to add that Pollock nevertheless did make theoretical points, but in his art rather than in writing: for instance, the insight that flowing paint held the surface better than the marked line or contour, and that was a move away from "madeness" and the look of the intended (Greenberg 1993: 248). Greenberg's recognition of Pollock's art as painting that 'works' and that opens up theoretical thinking—even perhaps to open up a new reality—points to the intersection of theory and practice in "action painting".

Pollock experiments with the work of paint and explores just what it is 'to paint': he tries splashing and drizzling; he puts the canvas on the floor, horizontally; he plays with colour and line. He pours and splatters, drips and spots, throws on sand and cigarette butts, makes handprints and footprints. He dribbles chaotic images of lines and daubs splodges of paint that spill out over the edge of the canvas; he makes images that cavort and dance (Deleuze calls Pollock's "action painting" *«danse frénétique»*) (1981a: 69). They are indefinite and orgiastic. Above all they are asignifying. There is no point in asking, "What do they mean?". Meaning is not the issue, action is, and as such Pollock's painting raises the question, "What can painting do?". This question is one already posed by Pollock who was concerned whether a painting worked or not. In an interview of 1967 for *Art in America*, his wife, the artist Lee Krasner, remembers that he would ask, "'Does it work?' Or looking at mine, he would comment, 'It works' or 'It doesn't work'. He may have been the first artist to have used the word 'work' in that sense" (Freidman 1972: 87). The question of work is a

question of performance and of the material of paint as a *matter* of expression.

The topology of Pollock's "all-over" work, such as *Summertime (Number 9)* 1948 (fig. 4.1) or *Number 30* [*Autumn Rhythm*] 1950, is far from fixed, but it is not a primordial soup out of which some homogeneous and meaningful image will be distilled or cut out—pastoral scenes of summertime or autumn perhaps—but a heterogeneous and multiple configuration of line and colour, the force of which emerges in the 'colour' of its complex composition of intersections and relations. There is a mess of lines and splatters, shooting and swirling in a mêlée of colour. When Pollock paints he selects colours, materials and implements with which to make a network of lines, but instead of imposing an 'order' of intersections and connections to fix a particular formed matter or invariable 'content' on the canvas, the network of lines remains in action. This is Abstract Expressionism. There is no sedimentation and the content remains a chaosmosis, processual and in-performance. Expression, or suggestibility, is similarly elusive because the organization and intersections of the canvas resist the formation of stable structures and compounds, and the raw matter of paint is never articulated as a defined functional structure. In Pollock we are always thrown back onto the heterogeneous matter of paint; unformed, unorganized; flowing, dripping, splattering paint. Not so much organization as orgiastic, and such orgiastic chaos is not easy on the eye. Where to begin, where to end? It defies a neat subject position and point of view and presents no coherent object. Instead there is the indefinition of the abstract line and colour that spills over the canvas.

Pollock himself is clear that his aim is not illustration but expression, and he aims to paint the equivalent of the experience of the age. In a note found in Pollock's files on his death is the following

hand-written statement (Friedman 1972: 195).

> *No sketches*
> acceptance of
> *what I do—.*
>
> -----------------------------------
>
> Experience of our age in terms
> of painting—not an illustration of—
> (but *the equivalent.*)
> Concentrated
> Fluid

For Pollock, action takes over from representation.

In his interview with William Wright for Sag Harbor radio in 1950, Pollock admits that the unconscious as "a very important side of modern art" (O'Connor 1967: 79–81). However, his argument is that the unconscious drives mean a lot in *looking* at paintings, that is in their interpretation, and he side steps Wright's question as to whether the artist is *painting* from the unconscious. Instead he talks about painting as expressing "his feelings rather than illustrating", and stresses his art as an "immediate" and "direct" way of making a statement, and as "inspired improvisation". Pollock suggests that the move away from representation in painting has occurred because of mechanical means of production. Because the photograph has captured representation so well, the artist has turned to the modern preoccupation with the unconscious, and that aim demands new theory and new practice.

In his direct painting Pollock clearly does not see the practice of painting as a coded application or as the forming of matter. He is not trying to make paint reflect some perception, impression or sensation, but putting paint to work—knotting lines and smearing colour. This is

not to say, however, that the history and traditional techniques of art are not important for Pollock, but that one might argue, as I do below, that he *pierces* the problematic of what is 'proper to art'—Deleuze's word (used both in relation to the theory–practice relation and to painting, notably Turner) is *percer* which carries the weight of the verb 'to break through' (Foucault and Deleuze 1972: 206; Deleuze and Guattari 1972: 132). What painting *does* is what is important here because in the 'action' model of painting there is no separation of theory and practice, only theoretical action and practical action.

In a conversation with Michel Foucault entitled 'Intellectuals and Power', Deleuze discusses the new relationship between theory and practice that he sees as coming out of the events of May 1968 (Foucault and Deleuze 1972: 205). Although here Foucault and Deleuze are considering theory and practice within the revolutionary movement, their reading has resonance for my reading of Pollock, himself a revolutionary in his field. Foucault and Deleuze see a new "partial and fragmentary" relationship between theory and practice (205). They understand this relationship as quite different from the process of totalization that distinguishes the understanding of practice as the application of theory, and its opposite, the idea that practice somehow informs theory. In these relationships the aim is to translate theory into practice and practice into theory, an application which totalizes theory and practice within a closed system of expression. But, in the fragmentary relationship there is no smooth transition between theory and practice, and no ultimate equivalence. Rather than a relationship of resemblance, there is the halting relationship of the relay.

As Deleuze and Foucault understand it, "Practice is a set of relays from one theoretical point to another, and theory is a relay from one practice to another", the point being that both theory and practice are

action, the action of breaking through "obstacles, walls and blockages" (Foucault and Deleuze 1972: 206). However, Deleuze gives privilege to practice as an instrument of change when he maintains that "No theory can develop without eventually encountering a wall, and that practice is necessary for *piercing this wall*" [my emphasis] (206). In this active process, theory hits a wall that is then pierced by practice and practice reaches a block that is then cleared by theory. Theory here is not a static body of knowledge but a "box of tools", something that is useful, that works. It is up to the intellectual, or the artist, to put those tools into action.

Understanding action, as Foucault and Deleuze do, as a constructive and creative approach to problems is helpful because it suggests that Pollock's "action painting" could be more than the sloppy and chancy mess it was dismissed as by European critics after the *Venice XXV Biennale* in 1950. It was, apparently, given the "silent treatment"; and though Pollock was admitted as an "American phenomenon", by Douglas Cooper of *The Listener*, his work was dismissed as "an elaborate if meaningless tangle of cordage and smears, abstract and shapeless ..." by Cooper, and as "wild and woolly" in *Time* (O'Connor 1967: 53). Without realising it, Cooper's assessment seems very apt. Abstract and shapeless is exactly what Pollock's work is if the problem is representation but, insofar as his work has 'no beginning and no end', it is a fine compliment where experimentation and creativity are at stake. In his struggle for experience over illustration, Pollock puts his tools to work and pierces the block or wall of representation with novel practice, practice that demands a new theory of abstract, but material, expressionism.

An heir to Cézanne, Pollock's problem is to paint sensation—a sensation that he interprets as the "Experience of our age"—and he sets out to make 'the equivalent' of that experience. Just as Van Gogh

understood that he must paint the muckiness and squelchiness, not the brown, of the ploughed field; and just as Millet recognized that it was the weight of the sack that the peasant carried that was important, not what was in it; so Cézanne saw that he must no longer see the wheatfield but lose himself in it (Deleuze 1991: 167; Deleuze and Guattari 1980: 343, 493). He must see it close-vision. All optical perspective is lost and the space of the field is no less and no more than the play of colour—"colouring-sensation" [*sensation colorante*].

Pollock works the experience of the age like a Cézannian field; the canvas is a ripe explosion—heat, fullness and abundance—of colour that does not occur in nature or in illustration. A painter of the landscape of the USA in the Forties and Fifties, Pollock's "all-over" canvases are an orgy of colour and movement with no evident organization, and landscapes with no identifiable landmarks—like the vast open spaces of the USA with its prairies, deserts, and oceans. Pollock recognized that movement and rhythm was what he was after in his "all-over" paintings when he says,

> My concern is with the rhythms of nature ... the way the ocean moves.... The ocean's what the expanse of the West was for me.... I work from the inside out, like nature. (Friedman 1972: 228; Polcari 1991: 255)

These landscapes are not illustration or even expressionism, if we mean by that the *expression of* ... because they are not about representing or giving a complete account of some perception, impression or experience. They are rolling catastrophic landscapes; landscapes without features but with plenty of colour—the "colouring sensation" [*sensation colorante*] that is the force of Cézanne's late work, not coloured sensations [*sensation en couleur*]—the colour of uncertainty and change, of the "experience of our age". This is 1950.

I discussed "colouring sensation" in the context of Merleau-Ponty's work and Cézanne's late painting in Chapter Two, and here want to extend the notion of "colouring sensation" to embrace what, in *Francis Bacon: Logique de la sensation*, Deleuze calls a "haptic sense of colour" (1981a: 90). In contradistinction to the optical, the haptic is distinguished as a function of touch and, after Aloïs Riegl, as "*«taktische»*" (99).[2] Haptic therefore carries with it the insubordination of the manual in painting and implies a sense of colour as colour-force: as hot and cold; as expanding and contracting; as pure tones and broken tones; as the play or modulation of colour. As Deleuze puts it, "that which one calls haptic vision is precisely this sense of colours [*sens des coleurs*]" (96–97). "Action painting" makes "colour sensation" and the movement of the virtual a material concern. It pushes the notion of the virtual beyond its association with the acentred, vertiginous chaos of smooth space—such as I identified in Mondrian's grids—to a concern with its material components and the palpable textures of the diagram that give it consistency.

I understand this space as a *close vision–haptic space*, after Deleuze and Guattari who discuss the aesthetic status of *close vision–haptic space* in *A Thousand Plateaus* '1440: The Smooth and the Striated' (1980: 492). Here they again acknowledge a debt to Riegl—for whom *close vision–haptic space* is a morphological, folded surface epitomised by late Roman relief work—as well as subsequent work by Wilhelm Worringer and by

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[2] In her article 'Validation by Touch in Kandinsky's Early Abstract Art', *Critical Inquiry*, Autumn 1989, Margaret Olin gives a useful explanation of the haptic using Berkeley's vision of the moon as a reference. She describes how the illusionary and fragmentary perception of light and shape is made 'real' by a correlation with the more reliable sense of touch. See also: Berkeley, An Essay towards a New Theory of Vision, 1709.

Henri Maldiney.[3] They go on to develop "the Smooth" as a material space, describing it as "both the object of close vision par excellence and the element of a haptic space", and giving the desert, steppe, ice and sea as examples of such "local spaces of pure connection" (493). They specifically draw attention to close vision as the "law of painting" and reference Cézanne as an artist who works in smooth space, which they here describe as a Riemannian space—a "pure patchwork" of connections, an amorphous, heterogeneous space in continuous variation (1980: 493, 485).

### *Landscapes and Haptic Spaces*

Among the many and mixed reviews of the US pavilion at the XXV Biennale in 1950, was this from Alfred H. Barr, Jr., writing for *Art News*, who discusses

> … the most original art among the painters of his generation. Pollock uses no brush, but lays his canvas on the floor and trickles the fluid paint on from above, his hand weaving the colour into a rhythmic, variegated labyrinth. The result provides an energetic adventure for the eyes, a *luna park* full of fireworks, pitfalls, surprises and delights. (quoted in O'Connor 1967: 52)

A *luna park*. Something full of surprises and delights; a labyrinth of amusements, an adventure, something new.[4] Where are the

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[3] See: Iverson 1993.

[4] See: *The Fold* for Deleuze's discussion of the labyrinth and Baroque mathematics (1993a: 17). In differential calculus, as for the irrational number (such as $\pi$), variation is infinite and undefinite. In other words, the irrational

individuated features, the landmarks and the contours? Where are the straight lines? This is an unknown, unexplored and fathomless space, an alien landscape.

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari had already moved from the idea of the canvas as a wall on which the landscape is inscribed to the notion of the landscape as a fluid double structure, the *white wall/black hole* system (1980: 167). Echoing the notion of the pure landscape as a deterritorialized, acentred and unlimited zone—a smooth space—Deleuze and Guattari understand the face as a *white wall/black hole* system, a system where the image emerges as a combination or pattern in the liquid morphology of the virtual, the "dimensionless black hole and the formless white wall" (168). Hence, in the plateau 'Year Zero: Faciality', Deleuze and Guattari see the face as the correlate of the landscape, boldly declaring that "the "problem" with which painting is inscribed is that of the *face–landscape*" (1980: 301).[5]

Rather than see the face as a screen exterior to the thinking, speaking, feeling individual, or as a blank canvas or surface on which ready-made human features and expressions are inscribed—a nose here, a smile there—in the *white wall/black hole* system the face emerges as a distribution of white and black, engendered *on* the white wall, *in* the black hole. There is nothing in the black/white system that resembles a human face, yet nevertheless "faces are distributed and

is released from subordination to the fixed point and therefore cannot be represented by the straight line of rational points but is labyrinthine.

[5] This correlation between landscape and face will become important when, in Chapter Six, I discuss the work of Francis Bacon and how the portrait emerges in an unframed 'landscape' of colour and line.

faciality traits organized" (169).

Like Hjelmslev's geological model, discussed above, the *white wall/black hole* system breaks down the duality of content and expression, form and substance in favour of flows of matter. The system works as an abstract machine, a machine which Deleuze and Guattari define in diagrammatic terms as, "the aspect or moment at which nothing but functions and matters remain" (1980: 141). They go on to add; "A diagram has neither substance nor form, neither content or expression" (141). Instead, it distributes substance and form, content and expression, across the plane of consistency, the plane that "knows nothing of the difference between the artificial and the natural. It knows nothing of the distinction between contents and expressions, or that between forms and formed substances" (68). The face is such a distribution. It is a surface of white planes and black holes, a map of lines and colour where contours emerge in that distribution to produce, out of the obscurity of the virtual, the eye, the ear, or the bone of the brow; the face that is chiselled or the face that is rounded. Pollock's late black and white works are a case in point.

In 1951, after the release of Hans Namuth film of him painting, and after falling sales after his fourth solo show at Betty Parsons Gallery in New York, Pollock succumbed to depression and a bout of heavy drinking. This period also saw a change in direction in his work to black and white paintings, paintings that are a fine demonstration of Deleuze and Guattari's *white wall/black hole* system. In Pollock's last paintings such as *Portrait and a Dream* 1953 and *Number 7* 1952 (fig. 4.3) a head emerges out of meandering lines and daubs of paint. These black and white works had a mixed reception. Emily Genauer for the *New York Herald-Tribune* (February 7, 1954) saw them as "a real step forward", while Roger M. Coates (*New Yorker* December 1956) thought them a return to an earlier figurative style (O'Connor 1967:

70, 75).

What is crucial to note in the *white wall/black hole* system is the continuum of the deterritorialized zone—the pure landscape—and the face. The white wall–black hole is not a formless ground of actuality but a virtual that becomes an entity. The system itself presumes nothing. Deleuze and Guattari call it an "abstract machine of faciality [*visagéité*]" (168). It runs hot and cold, and fast and slow. It is ripe and full of colour, distinctive and individual, but certainly not natural or even human. This distribution is not distinguished by shape or proportion but by "colouring sensation" and relations of timbre and hue—tone, quality and complexion. High or low, soft or sharp, this colouring is a matter of expression and is understood only in terms of its composition and construction—how it works, and what it does. The landscape works in the same way as the face. There is no empty set on which the scene is set; instead the abstract machine produces the pictorial nomadic landscape as a surface of daubs of colour and meandering lines, within which contoured features might, or might not, emerge; an adventure for the eyes and an event of *close vision–haptic space*; like a map of Gettysburg or a luna park.[6]

In a review for the *New York Sun* December 1949, Henry McBride compared Pollock's *Number 14* 1949 to "a flat, war-shattered city,

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[6] The idea that contours emerge out of the abstract lines of the diagram is key to the argument that I make in Chapter Six for an understanding of portraiture/figuration that is itself a revolution to abstraction. The possibility of the emergent contour is important in an understanding of Deleuze's notion of the Event within the Bergsonian ontology, as a virtual multiplicity that is continuous with the actual. This contrasts with Alain Badiou's critique of Deleuze in *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being* (1997), which I noted in Chapter One. See: Chapter One note 16.

possibly Hiroshima, as seen from a great height in moonlight"; and Sam Hunter, writing for *Time* magazine, also in 1949, disparagingly comments that "A Jackson Pollock painting is apt to resemble a child's contour map of the Battle of Gettysburg . . ." and goes on to note that, "Nevertheless, he is the darling of a highbrow cult which considers him 'the most powerful painter in America.'" (quoted in O'Connor 1967: 49, 46). Hunter's "nevertheless" misses the radicality of Pollock's break with convention; it is precisely because his painting breaks with the fine contours of the mature landscape on a human scale that Pollock is a powerful painter. His battle is the struggle against the clarity of representation and his landscape has all the violence of Gettysburg, the bloody chaos and complexity of the contour freed from strategic precision. There is no "nevertheless".

### *The Manual and Matters of Expression*

In Pollock's painting the 'landscape' is transversed by the abstract line—strokes, marks and patches of colour—and it is the manner in which these heterogeneous and material components (the chaosmosis) of the landscape are held together that creates the melody and rhythm of the work (Deleuze and Guattari 1980: 336). We are led to consider the conditions of the Event on the canvas. It is defined at the machinic level by diagrammatic virtualities—correlations, tensions and intersections—and by the capacity to form melodic and rhythmic themes, and by what Deleuze and Guattari call the "consistency of *matters* of expression" [my emphasis] (1980: 334). Ironically this seems to be just what Greenberg admires in Pollock's painting when he praises its "intensity and force", "splendour and eloquence", and its "range of mood" (1993: 111). So although when Greenberg identifies a unity in Pollock's successful work he distinguishes between the

delimiting pictorial unity and what that unity communicates, his emphasis on Pollock's compositional and technical skill points to a concern with unity as a synthesis of the heterogeneous material components of the painting over the individuated optical illusion it might perpetrate. For instance, he mentions that Pollock followed Hans Hoffman in turning to "drip" techniques in order to get away from the "artificial" marks, habits and mannerisms of the painterly hand left by brush, or palette knife, and he perceptively notes that "marked lines or contours did not hold that [picture] surface with the same inevitability as those that resulted from the falling or flowing of paint" (1993: 71, 111, 248).

Pollock's vigorous efforts to eliminate the deliberate and "madeness" from his work shift the interest from optical space and pictorial composition to the manual and the action of painting itself—Greenberg talks about Pollock's "revulsion from 'madeness', from the look of the intended and arranged and contrived and trimmed and 'tickled'" (Greenberg 1993: 248). In a move that echoes the move in Mondrian's *Boogie-Woogie* paintings from the line that is subordinate to the point to the abstract line where the point marks the movement of the line, the hand is no longer subordinate to the optical. It is the power of the manual that confronts the eye, and the matter and material of painting (the stroke-lines [*trait-ligne*] and the colour-patches [*tache couleur*]) that mark the rhythm of the abstract line. This is "action painting", painting where the point has a creative function and the line is 'without image'.

The analogy of the map is therefore useful but tenuous because these are not human landscapes and, unlike the aerial map or images of the earth from space, no definite form will emerge when they are zoomed in on or focused. These landscapes are *close vision–haptic space* in which both the object 'out there' and the subject as point of view are

lost—as in Cézanne's wheatfields, or the desert, steppe, ice and sea, which are Deleuze and Guattari's own examples of smooth space (1980: 493). Here orientations, landmarks and linkages are not fixed but change and unfold according to step-by-step local relations, as in Riemannian space. In contrast to the distant vision and perspective of optical space, haptic space recognizes no orienting distance between subject and object and so no point of view. Haptic implies a sense of touch [from the Greek *haptein* to touch) but in choosing 'haptic' over 'tactile' Deleuze and Guattari stress that the eye is not in opposition to the hand, and that in haptic space the eye may assume a non-optical function (1980: 492).

This accords with Merleau-Ponty's image of the artist who "immersed in the visible", "interrogates with his gaze"; and it is something that we shall encounter in Klee and the idea of journeying through a painting (Merleau-Ponty 1961: 166). Deleuze too defines haptic vision as the touch of the eye when in the last rubric in *Francis Bacon: Logique de la sensation* 'The Eye and the Hand' where he describes haptic vision as "when sight discovers in itself a function of touching that belongs to it and to it alone and which is independent of its optical function" (1981a: 99). The point being made here is that the eye 'touches'.

The demand for the eye to take on a non-optical function—a Cézannian immersion—is recognized by Sylvester. In a broadcast review of Pollock's retrospective at the *Whitechapel Art Gallery* in 1958, he observes that a Pollock landscape is not a static, scenic view. There are no focal points. The viewer must enter the painting, and become a participant in its creation by journeying through it, strolling, meandering, even crashing and battling through the landscape; "We create the perspectives as we move about in the painting" and what appears chaotic to the static eye becomes a seductive composition

(1997: 63). Sylvester sees this immersion as a way of taming the canvas. For him Pollock's work "seduces as readily as it bruises" (62). Pollock is the "wild man", the "slapdash improviser", the "frenzied doodler" the producer of "conflict and strife", and of "violent combat", but he is also the master of serenity, elegance and calm (62). He remembers that "The first time I saw some Pollocks—it was in 1950—I thought they were incoherent nonsense, messy, uncontrollable daubs, pots of paint flung in the public's face. What could I have been using for eyes? Pollock's handling of paint and organization of colour is as sure, as subtle, as magisterial as Matisse's or Bonnard's" (62).[7]

What is wild from the outside is an elegant walk from 'within'. But, not everyone finds such an easy solace in Pollock. In her review of the 1999 retrospective at *The Tate Gallery* in London, Sally Vincent relates how Kurt Vonnegut felt depressed because of the inhumanity of Pollock's work. Vonnegut's analysis is not unlike Sylvester's but whereas Sylvester finds the work exciting, Vonnegut "came away feeling like shit" (Vincent 1999: 12). "Pollock's paintings have no

[7] This review of 1958 was not published until Sylvester's volume of critical essays *About Modern Art* appeared in 1996. The review repeats, almost verbatim, an analysis of Klee's late work first published in 1948, and also included in the collected essays (1996: 35–38). Here he similarly describes the spectator as participant and compares the viewing experience to swimming and being buffeted by waves: Sylvester likens this experience to swimming, commenting that, "We are as much a part of it as we are of the sea when we go swimming. We plough our way through it and in turn are buffeted by the waves—lines continually changing in plane and direction" (63). Swimming is also an analogy used by Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition* to explain the move to objective perception (1968: 165), and by Gasquet's Cézanne in his description of a visit to the Louvre (Gasquet 1921: 183).

horizon, no focal point, nothing to recognize. *No mercy* ... there's nothing to recognize but novelty" [my italics] (12).

That jarring novelty occurs when the hand is no longer subordinate to the eye, and when the manual takes on a radical independence to make marks that are, as Deleuze says in a passage to be discussed later in this chapter, "irrational, involuntary, accidental, free, chance"—not representative, illustrative or narrative (Deleuze 1981a: 66). The hand imposes on the eye confronting vision with the shock *[coup]* of the asignifying, a strike that impacts like *the force of a thunderclap* that Sylvester identified in Mondrian's lines (1997: 135). As Deleuze and Guattari point out in 'Year Zero: Faciality', there is no continuum between the representational and illustrational image and the image that confronts (Deleuze and Guattari 1980: 170). It is not that, under the microscope or the telescope, some latent organization will be disclosed. There is no possible point of view—objective or subjective—of coherency or constancy. There is no organization, just experimentation. Just energy and motion, colour and line. The canvas is a displaced and decentred, asignifying "unframed space".

This is the landscape of Pollock, something already noted by Lee Krasner who, in an interview with Bernard Friedman in 1957, characterized the Pollock's canvas as "unframed space" (Friedman 1972: 157).[8] This "unframed space" is absolutely not the picturesque, pastoral landscapes, of say Constable, where there are distinctive features, fixed locations and a coherent, integrated completion, but something more like the vibrant, chaotic seas of the late Turner. It is the labyrinthine space of Pollock's *Summertime* (*Number 9*) 1948 (fig. 4.1) or *Lavender Mist* (*Number 1*) 1950 where there is no defined

[8] Friedman's book is perceptively entitled *Jackson Pollock: Energy Made Visible* (1972).

territory but an absolute deterritorialization.

In Pollock the move is from the optical to the manual. Colours are thrown at the canvas—dripped, poured, drizzled—in defiance of any representational, illustrative or narrative norms, so that, as becomes crucial in Bacon's work, figuration is suggested by and arises within a chaotic configuration of colour and line *without contour*. In reference to Bacon, Deleuze describes the diagram as preparatory works, but for Pollock the diagram is not a preparatory work. He stays with pure manual painting producing catastrophic, chaotic canvases with bursts of colour and line that tend towards the absolutely asignifying and the absence of suggestion. Whether called "action painting" or Abstract Expressionism, this 'unframed' expressionism is a style: the manner and rhythm of performance; quiet or noisy; calm or rushed; dancing or trudging. The verb 'to paint' has endless permutations and modifications: rhythms, tones, tempo. A temperament. Each painting is defined by its individual style and marked by its number and date. Visual but not optical, diagrammatic but not structured, Pollock's painting is governed by experience not rationale; the hand not the eye; touch not vision. It is an art of distribution not depiction, line not shape. The manual labyrinthine spaces that Pollock constructs with his chance lines are the *close vision–haptic space* of the landscape.

In 1950, Pollock had a major show at Betty Parsons's Gallery in New York; a series of landscapes numbers 1–32. Among them are paintings with lyrical titles, like *Lavender Mist*, *Shadows*, *Autumn Rhythm*, titles that suggest that the paintings are expressive and descriptive, even representational. But, these paintings are *Number 1* [*Lavender Mist*] 1950, *Number 2* [*Shadows*] 1950, *Number 30* [*Autumn Rhythm*] 1950, and the title bestowed retrospectively. Like an epithet or tag, the titles are not descriptive or a measure of the work but serve only as an *aide memoire* in parenthesis, like a "combination" or cipher, an opus number

or identifying numeral [*chiffre*] (Deleuze and Guattari 1991: ix). For who is to say that the complicated web of dribbles and splodges—black and white and blue—in *Number 1* [*Lavender Mist*] 'represents' lavender mist. The painting is, after all, only the first in the series, Only the initial experiment of that year.

The condition of that work is the experimental action 'to paint'; painting where action takes over from representation. It is far from being child's play or casually sloppy, as suggested by Mr. A. Hyatt Major (Curator of Prints, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) in an article for *Life* magazine 'A *Life* Roundtable on Modern Art' (October 1948) when he remarked: "I suspect any picture I think I could have made myself" (quoted in O'Connor 1967: 44). However Hyatt Major is not alone. Bacon, who admits the importance of the "accident" in his own work, dismisses the *tachiste* or free marks of abstract expressionism, and of Pollock in particular, because he doesn't like the "sloppiness" of it (Sylvester 1975: 52, 61, 92). However, I think that it is precisely this sloppiness that takes the painting from the eye to the hand, and that, ironically, it is by drawing the contour out of the chance and 'sloppy' marks of his own preparatory work that Bacon carries the immediacy of the manual line into his portraits.

Pollock himself absolutely refutes the suggestion that his work depends on the accident, and by implication that it is sloppy or chancy. He situates his painting within the oeuvre of European modern art and justifies his methods as fitting to the contemporary development of that tradition. In an important interview, with William Wright for Sag Harbor radio in 1950 (but never broadcast), he talks about how the means and techniques of different eras and cultures express the needs of each age; "Well, method is, it seems to me, a natural growth out of need, and from a need the modern artist has found a way of expressing the world about him" (quoted in O'Connor 1967: 80). That expression

is not an accident, a slip-up or an anomaly, and neither are the techniques.

Though painting on the floor, using liquid paint and the brush as a drip stick, gave Pollock an unusual degree of freedom—the freedom to move around the canvas and to apply the paint with the fluidity of the stroke—his compositions are controlled, and that control comes from experience. In other words, his painting is far from chaotic. When asked by Wright if the stick is not more difficult to control than the brush, Pollock replies: "I don't—ah—with experience—it seems to be possible to control the flow of paint, to a great extent, and I don't use—I don't use the accident—'cause I deny the accident" (O'Connor 1967: 80). The accident is impossible because Pollock has no definite image in mind, just a general idea of what he is about, and because there is no preconception there can be no accidents or mishaps. Either the painting works or it doesn't. "Action painting" does not necessarily mean a disregard of tradition or theory; it does mean experimentation and the effort to break through tradition. It does mean the landscape that is a *close vision–haptic space* and a *luna park* full of fireworks, pitfalls, surprises and delights.

### *The Theatre of Metamorphosis*

Like fireworks, Pollock's "all-over" canvases are an explosion of colour where patterns emerge with the force of flight. Like fireworks, they are a spectacular that dazzles the eye and where the geometry of the optical collapses. And like a rocket or flash of lightening, these explosive lines wreak not only an optical but also a material catastrophe that works on the plane of composition. I suggest that this catastrophe goes beyond a mere disturbance of recognisable form,

which is how James Williams reads Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of Turner in his article 'Deleuze on J. M. W. Turner: Catastrophism in Philosophy?' (1997). Williams gives *The Fighting 'Téméraire'* 1838 as an instance where "recognizable forms are disturbed or torn asunder in explosions of light and colour" (Ansell Pearson 1997: 238).

However, reading Turner after Deleuze's later work on the diagram in *Francis Bacon: Logique de la sensation* (1981a) leads me to the more radical interpretation of Turner as wreaking a material catastrophe that takes painting beyond the movement of *déformation* to the gaseous explosions of dissolution and decomposition. This I associate with the "superior empiricism" that, in *Difference and Repetition (1968a)*, Deleuze aligns with aesthetics as a science of the being of the sensible (that which can only be sensed) and a "properly chaotic world *without identity*" (1968a: 56–57). Deleuze specifically mentions painting and sculpture as "distorters" of representation and "modern art" as a theatre that tends to realize conditions where representation is "distorted, diverted and torn from its centre" and where that divergence and decentring is affirmed; where, in short difference is shown to be *differing* (56). Here art becomes "experience" but an experience beyond the frame. Deleuze describes this open experience of modern art as "a veritable *theatre* of metamorphosis and permutations. A theatre where nothing is fixed, a labyrinth without a thread"; it is a world that accords to "a strange 'reason', that of the multiple, chaos and difference (nomadic distributions, crowned anarchies)", and which is, as Deleuze says, "completed and unlimited" (1968a: 56–57). With his own intricate labyrinths, and his aim to paint the "experience of our age" without illustration, Pollock's "all-over" canvases are surely a theatre of this strange reason.

Deleuze's "superior empiricism" echoes Bergson's work on creative

evolution because it too is concerned with a theory of matter that breaks through the habits of representation and returns to the vital and virtual movement that haunts actual experience.[9] As I discussed in Chapter One, in *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze tries to "'do philosophy'", a project that turns on the attempt to introduce difference into the concept (1968a: xv). This is configured as the demand for "thought without image" and the effort to break through the limiting rationale of norms, conventions and common sense. These are the same habits of representation that accord to what, in *Creative Evolution* (1911), Bergson calls the "logic of solids", a model that determines matter within a given identity of the concept as discrete and discontinuous forms—as homogeneous units in space (Bergson 1911: ix). The breakthrough comes in going beyond that determination of solids, setting flows in motion or, as I think Pollock does, attaining the gaseous state of free movement, and painting "without image".

The effort to think "without image" and beyond the identity of the concept causes Deleuze to review the task of philosophy and ask the question "What is thinking?". The parallel concern for the arts is "What is art?" and, more specifically, "What is painting?". Pollock returns to this question in his exploratory manual painting, a move that I interpret as a return to a theory of matter that confronts the dissolution of form. The manual throw of paint is 'pure' painting because of it effects an optical catastrophe, and because it disregards pictorial conventions 'proper to art'. Instead, the painting becomes on the canvas, each throw of paint a repetition that is a variation, each throw a stroke or mark that changes the dynamic of the 'whole' figuration. The canvas is always a whole that is always "incomplete"

[9] Keith Ansell Pearson provides a useful discussion of Deleuze's "superior empiricism" and its parallel with Bergson's creative evolution (Ansell Pearson 1999: 77–84).

when viewed from the point of view of a representational model, but which as 'pure' painting is "completed and unlimited".

The dissolution and decomposition of form executed by Pollock's manual, "action painting" is what Bergson would call "a free action or a work of art" because it produces the continual elaboration of the new; each stroke and mark is a variation "without image" and therefore absolutely creative (Bergson 1911: 223, 11). In Pollock the lines and colour are 'beyond' the space–time frame; elements are not isolated, there are no distinct contours and the 'whole' is in continuous variation—a catastrophic burst of colour and line. As such the composition defies optical and pictorial cohesion and eludes actualization. It thus performs as an Event on the canvas, an Event [*Événement*] that is defined by Deleuze and Guattari in *What is Philosophy?* as the "pure immanence of what is not actualized and what remains indifferent to actualization" (Deleuze and Guattari 1991: 156 [147]). So while the Event is a virtual in the sense of being 'before' the actuality of optical and pictorial experience, it is the real extracted in the manual dissolution and decomposition of form.

How then are we to think of this Event on the canvas, an Event that remains indifferent to actualization and the logic of identity and solids? There are other worlds and other states of reality: the liquid and the gaseous. And while *déformation* might point to a liquid conception of matter, the more radical dissolution that we see in Pollock suggests the gaseous, and explosive, catastrophic landscapes.

### *Catastrophic Landscapes*

Deleuze and Guattari first write about catastrophe in painting in

*Anti-Oedipus* (1972), nine years before Deleuze's work on Bacon. Surprisingly perhaps Deleuze and Guattari have Turner's late work in mind, *The Slave Ship—Typhon* [sic] *coming on* 1840 or *Snow Storm: Steam-boat off a Harbour's Mouth* 1842 (fig. 4.4) for instance, where lines without contours swirl, shoot and dive in the chaotic intensity of the storm, and where patches of dark and light cut across the definition of sea, sky and ship:

> The canvas turns in on itself, it is pierced by a hole. A lake, a flame, a tornado, an explosion. ... The canvas is truly broken, sundered by what penetrates it. All that remains is a background of gold and fog, intense, intensive, traversed by depth in what has just sundered its breath: the schiz. Everything becomes mixed and confused, and it is here that the breakthrough—not the breakdown—occurs. (1972: 132)

The breakthrough comes in the performance of the abstract lines of Turner's diagram when the canvas turns in on itself. It does not function as a surface, screen or white wall upon which to inscribe an impression of the storm. Such coding and organization is not just dismantled or broken down, but being "pierced by a hole" it escapes signification/significance, and here again Deleuze uses the verb *percer*, to break through.

Deleuze and Guattari comment that, seeing Turner "one understands what it means to scale the wall, and yet to remain behind; to cause flows to pass through, without knowing any longer whether they are carrying us elsewhere or flowing back over us already" (1972: 132). This is a key moment in move from representation to abstraction, and the breakthrough to painting as an abstract machine. Turner is not executing a breakdown, disintegration or *déformation* of

form but escaping the exterior organization of systems of signification and what is 'proper to art'. There is no state of affairs, no lived, and no 'body' of actualization.

Turner resists the visibility of actualization and works at the level of the imperceptible/invisible and the unliveable, and reveals the infinite and im-material movement that is the terror of the storm. Deleuze and Guattari note that Turner's last, and they suggest most accomplished paintings, are often thought "incomplete"—like Mondrian's last work and Bacon's canvases. He sees that incompleteness as a strength because it means that the work belongs to no recognized school or period, but instead finds status in its incompletion as experimentation.[10]

> But at least something arose whose force fractured the codes, undid the signifiers, passed under the structures, set the flows in motion, and effected breaks at the limits of desire: a breakthrough. ... art as a process without goal, but that attains completion as such. (Deleuze and Guattari 1972: 370)

In the circulation of the strange liberated flows of the broken canvas the painting becomes truly abstract. There is no recognized form of content or form of expression: the wall is pierced. The painting is asignifying, an abstract machine that produces the storm in

[10] In a footnote on art as experimentation Deleuze and Guattari refer the reader to John Cage. See: Deleuze and Guattari 1972: 371 and Cage 1968: 13.

Deleuze and Guattari also cite Anglo-American literature as an art that moves to abstraction, citing Thomas Hardy, D. H. Lawrence, Henry Miller and Jack Kerouac (1972: 132). See also: 'On the Superiority of Anglo–American Literature' (Deleuze 1977: 36–76).

the "combination" [*chiffre*] of colour and line (Deleuze and Guattari 1991: ix). The storm becomes an Event on the canvas, a performance on the plane of composition that works as a being of sensation. Its reality depends on internal modulation of colour and performance of the abstract line. It works through counter-actualization, resisting fixity or coding with a virtual multiplicity, and is therefore an Event that "remains indifferent to actualization" (Deleuze and Guattari 1991: 156).

In *Francis Bacon: Logique de la sensation* (1981a) Deleuze returns to Turner, referencing him as a painter who, like Pollock, makes a catastrophe of the painting. Turner in 1842 and Pollock a hundred years later both return to the manual and the diagram—the operative assemblage of strokes and marks, lines and zones—the haphazard grid of marks that takes over the canvas. Like Pollock, Turner was a physical painter who began by pouring paint, and who attacked the canvas in a frenzy of tearing, scratching and scrubbing, and whose canvases retain that intensity in the finished work: "he tore, he scratched, he scrubbed at it in a kind of frenzy and the whole thing was a chaos" (Wilton 1987: 114).[11] The intensity is not illustrative of the storm, but its equivalent. As chance gestures, the web of marks of the diagram is "non-representational, non-illustrative, non-narrative" (Deleuze 1981a: 66). There is no optical organization only a return to practice and to the theatre of metamorphosis, to catastrophe or chaos: "The artist's hand has stepped in [*s'est interposée*] to exercise its independence and to smash [*briser*] a sovereign optical organization: nothing more is seen, as in catastrophe or chaos" (Deleuze 1981a: 66).

Catastrophe and chaos are evocative words, but neither is without

[11] See Williams 1997 who makes extensive use of Wilton's work on Turner.

ambiguity. While the word 'catastrophe' is evocative and, as is evident in Turner's work, appropriate, I want to stress that the Event of abstraction that we encounter on the plane of composition is not extraordinary, despite Deleuze and Guattari's definition of Turner's catastrophe as belong in to no school and no period. What becomes evident in the painting is the 'catastrophe' as counter-actualization and the breakthrough to abstraction, and that this move returns painting to the plane of immanence and the very ordinary work of the material and matter of paint. What is extraordinary are the transcendent limits that govern codes, territory and the definition of what is 'proper to art' that restricts content and expression to recognisable signifying forms.

Chaos too is rather misleading. Deleuze equates the diagram mess or disorder [*le gâcher*] and he regards it, in Turner though not in Pollock, as a prelude to figuration (1981a: 66). As Williams recognizes in his work on catastrophism, Turner transforms the diagram into a narrative painting by the addition of a few hesitant but recognisable details, such as the vertical line of the mast, the curve of the paddle wheel and the yellow flare of the chimney, details which take *Snow Storm: Steam-Boat off Harbour's Mouth* 1842 (fig. 4.4) from a chaotic virtuality to actualization, but without losing the force of the catastrophe, the *gâchis* of the diagram. The choice of the French word *gâchis* is interesting because of it reinforces the concern with painting itself, with matter. As well as 'mess' and 'disorder', *gâchis* means 'waste', and the verb *gâcher* is to waste or to spoil [*gâter*]. Like the English word, gash, there is the implicit action of the slash and the wound, and indeed the Old French *garser* means to wound. Earlier, in *Difference and Repetition* (1968a), Deleuze uses the scar and the wound to explain his definition of the sign as a contraction or synthesis of time. In the same way that the scar is a contraction or contemplation and the "present fact of having been wounded", Turner's *Snowstorm* can be understood as a contemplation that carries the violence enacted on the canvas into

the finished work, work that remains forever wounded and therefore 'incomplete' (Deleuze 1968a: 70–7). The specific details of ship or fire are a contraction of the act of painting, an intimate circuitous relation where the matter and movement of the virtual persists in the actual, like the scar that is a sign of the wound.

In Pollock's work there is no detailing and no figuration. Instead of exteriorizing the work and looking to illustration, Pollock stays with the *gâchis* and goes with the rhythmic movement of the action of painting. The mêlée of line and colour is not a chaotic prelude to an ordered and recognisable, liveable actualization, but stands on its own and is revealed as an event that eludes actualization precisely because it remains faithful to its own infinite and movement. Pollock also wounds the canvas, but his work remains raw. There is no figuration here, just a battleground of lines and colour. Pollock calls it "direct painting" because he doesn't make sketches or drawings, but it is also direct because it doesn't have recourse to the transcendent framework of illustration (O'Connor 1967: 81). Reaching, throwing and scratching, pouring, dripping and splattering; there is energy, vigour, speed and direction; patterns and rhythm. There are traits of action and the power of the hand. The painting remains at the level of the catastrophe of the diagram and with action, as a complex(ion) of thrown line and colour.

## *Solid, Liquid and Gas*

When he comes to discuss Bacon, Deleuze compares the manual attack on the canvas to the eruption of another world, a world without identity or signification:

> It is like the sudden appearance of another world [*le sugissement d'un autre monde*] Because these marks [*marques*], these strokes [*traits*] are irrational, involuntary, accidental, free, chance. They are non-representational, non-illustrative, non-narrative. But they are also not significant or signifying: they are asignifying strokes [*traits*]. They are the traits [*traits*] of sensation, of an indefinite sensation [*sensation confuses*] (the indefinite sensation that one ffinds in continued birth [*qu'on apporte en naissant*] Cézanne says). (Deleuze 1981a: 66)

This comment about indefinite sensation and birth or arising of [*naissant*] echoes Merleau-Ponty's commentary on Cézanne in the 'Eye and Mind' essay where, discussing how the painter reveals the "virtually visible" to demonstrate the depth actual, he says that "The painter's vision is a continued birth" (1961: 168). Deleuze's reading of Cézanne is more radical than that of Merleau-Ponty because, as I discussed in Chapter Two, whereas Merleau-Ponty sees the artist bringing the prehuman virtual into the human vision and actuality, Deleuze sees the artist working at the level of sensation, extracting the virtual which arises on the canvas "like the sudden appearance of another world".

Reading *Anti-Oedipus* (1972) after the work on Bacon (1981a), I suggest that this eruption is a breakthrough that pushes painting beyond the fracturing of codes, and beyond the move to the liquid flow of smooth spaces. When the canvas or wall is pierced, flows are disrupted and the system crumbles. There is dissolution of form, from solid, to liquid and to the explosive catastrophe of the gaseous. This is suggested by Deleuze's work on the perception-image in *Cinema 1* (1983) where he tracks three states of the perception-image: solid, liquid and gaseous.

In this analysis Deleuze gives a special privilege to cinematography observing that the cinematographic image cuts across the nominal two poles of perception, the subjective and the objective. He takes as his starting point Bergson's definition: subjective perception refers to a privileged central image, such as the human eye; objective perception is where images vary in relation to one another, as in things (1983: 76).[12] In the cinema, the camera adopts an independent camera-consciousness that introduces another perception, called after Pasolini's theorization, a "free indirect subjective" perception, or more lyrically "the cinema of poetry" (74). The perception image, either subjective or objective, is reflected in the eye of the camera, and thus loses its status as subjective viewpoint or objective thing. Subjectivity is complicated when the man watching is himself being watched, and objectivity is compromised by the autonomy of the camera (which in a double complicity is not necessarily the privileged eye of the *auteur* or director but might itself be in movement).

Instead of distinctive poles of perception, subjective passes into objective and fixed points disappear as the camera—here the centre of reference—is itself put into movement, zooming, splitting, cutting, focusing .... Instead of a world that conforms to a logic of solids and fixed reference points, there is the confusion of a non-representational, non-narrative form; there is the "appearance of another world". What becomes important in this moveable feast is not the framework of the

[12] These two poles of perception are not exclusive; for instance, the most subjective of perceptions, a dream or hallucination perhaps, is experienced more like an objective perception because what distinguishes the dream from wakefulness or the hallucination from normal reality is that the privileged centre of human consciousness is itself put into movement (Deleuze 1983: 76).

image but the composition of the cinematographic frames and the 'whole' as an assemblage or set [*ensemble*] of simultaneous images. There is no solidity, only the rhythms of flowing-matter. The inversion of movement from the movement between fixed points, to the movement of the point or the eye itself is a change of state, from the logic of solids to the liquid state and the "dizzy disappearance of fixed points" (77). Here the image "passes through or under the frame", defying the exteriority of the centred eye, and being actualized in the material configuration of the molecular construction. When it comes to painting we can see a parallel move in Pollock's extraordinary work of the 1940s, which I read as experiments in liquid flows that herald the explosive gaseous work of the later "all-over" canvases.

In a review of Pollock's one-man show at the San Francisco Museum of Art in 1945, a show which included *The Moon-Woman* 1942, *Stenographic Figure* 1942 and *Male and Female* 1942, Alfred Frankenstein, for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 12, likened Pollock's work to jazz:

> His pictures are almost entirely nonrepresentational, but his abstraction has nothing to do with geometry; the flare and splatter and fury of his painting is emotional rather than formal, and like the best jazz, one feels that much of it is the result of inspired improvisation rather than conscious planning. (quoted in O'Connor 1967: 38).

As we saw in Chapter Three, jazz was important in Mondrian's move from form to rhythm. Music again becomes important in theorizing Klee's work, but here the reference is interesting because of the equation between the "inspired improvisation" of jazz and Pollock's non-formal painting of the 1940s where the dissolution of

the motif is an inversion of movement that takes the image from "conscious planning" and the solid to the liquid state and to rhythm.

Canvases like *Male and Female* 1942, *Moon Woman Cuts the Circle* 1943 (fig. 4.5), and *Mural* 1946, are mannerist paintings where movement and connections become more important than form and content. In using the motif as totem rather than as iconic motif, Pollock is already on the way to 'pure painting' as he is concerned not with the construction of a solid image but of an energetic force produced in the diagrammatic system of shifting relations between motifs—intersections, connections, divergences and conjunctions. Take *Moon Woman Cuts the Circle* 1943 where the new moon, the knife, the hermaphrodite Indian … are not so much symbolic images as localized diagrammatic features. They are 'facts', details that are dislocated from their narrative within Roman legend or Greek myth and assume autonomy as totems, that is as specific figural motifs whose connections are far more important than any intrinsic or iconic meaning. That the features are details is a point that Friedman makes about Pollock's late work, in his book *Jackson Pollock: Energy Made Visible* (1972). His observation that those details construct an image of energy is equally as relevant to the work of the 1940s:

> … Details, details, and more details, some seemingly isolated phenomena, others the effects of specific causes, and yet all the details, all the facts, all the things, all the things as facts, all the drips, splatters, spots, stains … all these add up to a total flowing image of time past, present and future, an image greater than the sum of its parts, an image extending beyond the limits of the frame and beyond death, an image of energy and its abstraction as money …. (Friedman 1972: 243)

By laying these details out across the surface Pollock makes them work as points between movements of convergence and divergence, of departure and return. Moon. Woman. Cut. Circle. 1943. They are details: knife to bird to head-dress to breast ... 'bit' by 'bit' moon imagery adds up and works on its own surface or plane, like a rolling landscape that flows without reference to an exterior subject, story or memory. Interiorized, the motif becomes rhythmic—as in the best jazz, in the writing of Proust, and the music of Liszt, or Wagner.

Proust, Liszt and Wagner are Deleuze and Guattari's examples when in the plateau 'Of the Refrain' they distinguish between the motif that functions as a signpost (again using the vocabulary of the landscape) and the autonomous rhythmic character:

> ... the motifs increasingly enter into conjunction, conquer *their own plane*, become autonomous from the dramatic action, impulses, and situations, and independent of characters and landscapes; they themselves become melodic landscapes and rhythmic characters continually enriching their internal relations. (1980: 319)

Non-pulsed, the motif remains a precise and identifiable feature, but it enters into the continuous variation of a improvised composition and, no longer the mute representation, it is the painting itself that sings. Deleuze and Guattari identify the independence of characters as a key moment in the move from representation to abstraction commenting that, "The discovery of the properly melodic landscape and the properly rhythmic character marks the moment of art when it ceases to be a silent painting on a signboard" (1980: 319). They go on to add, "This may not be art's last word ..." (319). Indeed it is not.

In Pollock's subsequent work the totemic motifs dissolve into the

"all-over" surface. Take for example *Eyes in the Heat* 1946 (fig. 4.6) and *Shimmering Substance,* also 1946. These are interim works where the motif is there but is either dissolved or submerged in the encroaching web of line. In his commentary on Pollock in *Abstract Expressionism and the Modern Experience* (1991), Stephen Polcari accurately describes the eyes in *Eyes in the Heat* 1946 as ones that "lurk" in the surface, eyes which are swallowed up by the heat (Polcari 1972: 250). The surface of the canvas has all the heat of the battle; it is intense, active and all consuming. Shimmering, dazzling and astonishing, there is nothing ethereal about the surface; it is the matter of paint that shimmers—the thick impasto strokes and the muddle of cut threads. In both *Eyes in the Heat* 1946 and *Shimmering Substance* 1946 the surface is dense and sculptural. What lies below is thin. The eyes in *Eyes in the Heat* 1946 and the yellow and red circles of *Shimmering Substance* 1946 are flat and thinly painted, as if the structured content, weak and thinly formed, is swallowed up by the strength of the whirling, swirling mass and the free movement of the activated surface.

### *The Free Movement of Gases*

The activated surface is an energetic system where each line and mark acts and reacts with each other. This corresponds to the gaseous system as Deleuze describes it in cinematographic terms in *Cinema 1* (1983), a system of "universal variation" and "universal interaction (*modulation*)": "Everything is as the service of variation and interaction: slow or high speed shots, superimposition, fragmentation, deceleration [*démultiplication*], micro-shooting [*micro-prise de vue*]" (1983: 80–81). Deleuze refers to Cézanne here, likening the modulation that he sees in Vertov's cinema to what Cézanne had already identified as "the world before man" and "iridescent chaos" (Deleuze 1983: 81).

In this system there is no focal point or exterior point of view but a *close vision–haptic space*, the point being that the eye is brought into the image. Deleuze draws a parallel between the eagle-eyed, human eye and the camera used as an apparatus for shooting film, and understands the move in cinema to montage, as in Vertov's work, as a move beyond the conditioning limitation of the camera and beyond the human. He thus distinguishes the cinema from the work of the camera, stating that "The cinema is not simply the camera: it is montage" (81).

While from the human point of view montage might be seen as construction, in the 'cine-eye' [*kino-eye*] it is "the pure-vision of a non-human eye, of an eye that would be in things" (Deleuze 1983: 81).[13] However the 'cine-eye' is not so much in things as in matter. The image stands on its own as a material montage of actions and reactions. I think therefore that the 'cine-eye' works in the same way as the "autonomous vision of the content", the "pure Form" that Deleuze identifies with Pasolini's "free indirect subjective" perception-image, which I mentioned earlier (Deleuze 1983: 74). By cutting across the objective and subjective poles of perception, this independent vision of the camera touches what Deleuze calls the "*genetic element*" of all possible perception (1983: 83). This is because it is not just concerned with the movement of internal relations, as Pollock is concerned to do in his mannerist work, such as *Moon Woman Cuts the Circle* 1943 (fig. 4.5), but returns to a differential of vital materialism to work on a plane of vibration and to confront the elements of free movement.

[13] The English edition of Vertov's writings is entitled *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov* after Vertov's essay of 1926 'Kino-Eye' (1960: 60–79). Kino-eye is a key concept for Vertov and occurs throughout his writings.

The gaseous state is defined by "the free movement of each molecule" (as opposed to the formal solid state where "molecules are not free to move about, and the material liquid state where "the molecules move about and merge into one another") (Deleuze 1983: 84). Deleuze likens this return to the particle of matter to Seurat's *pointilliste* work and to Landow's film *Bardo Follies* where the screen gradually disintegrates into a granular soft focus, with the effect that the screen itself seems to throb, and finally to divide up into bubbles of air. Pollock's "all-over" work is a similar decomposition, a gaseous state where heterogeneous components move freely in variation and modulation, and the 'whole' as montage exists only in the texture of that becoming.

In *Chaosmosis*, Guattari calls the movement of montage a "collective dance" (1992: 35). This defines montage as a "machinic heterogenesis" that synthesises all of the components it traverses because "[different components are swept up and reshaped in a sort of dynamism" (35). The abstract machine of montage "abstracts" (collects) as it dances across the plane of composition, giving the sporadic lines and marks "an efficiency" and "a power of ontological auto-affirmation" (35). Guattari highlights the fact that "abstract" is also to "extract" (35). Echoing Deleuze and Guattari's statement in *What is Philosophy?* that the task of painting is to "extract" new melodic landscapes, the collective dance can be understood as movement that wrests the virtual from chaos, a dance that, as it unfolds, extracts the virtual as a real entity or Event on the canvas (1991: 176, 156)

Variation and modulation does not therefore mean that there is no discernible patterning in the image, but only that that patterns emerge in the creative ontogenesis of montage, in the movement of the "collective dance" and, as I noted above, at the "service of variation

and interaction" (Deleuze 1983: 80–81). As both Sylvester (1997) and Vincent (1999) have noted, the shock of Pollock's work is precisely that the images jar with human perception. Pollock's work seduces and bruises. It is not a question of the human eye determining a correlation between images or between lines. Instead, it is rhythm and the "eye of matter" that fills the interval between action and reaction (Deleuze 1983: 81). As Deleuze explains, again using Vertov, it is not the quality of each line that counts, but the material system and the "dialectic of matter" itself (1983: 39–40). In Pollock, the strokes and marks are in perpetual interaction, lines and splashes are components—"catalysts, converters, transformers"—which receive and transmit movement, affect speed, direction and order, and which have an effect on the 'whole' out of all proportion to their individual status (39). This is particularly clear in Pollock's grandiose work, *Mural* 1943, where a playful correlation between haphazard strokes and marks sets up a powerful repetitive rhythm, like a dance. This huge mural is twenty feet long and eight feet wide, and was painted in a single, frenzied session. A distinctive vertical black stroke is repeated across the length of the canvas in a complex rhythmic dance of swirls and flings, as if the 'eye' is following a strange swirling figure striding along, and where the dancer is indistinguishable from the dance. Each 'molecule' of paint is an abstract line and a free movement. Each throw a differential element in a montage and a machinic assemblage of molecular interactions—actions and reactions—that produces a *pointilliste* texture out of which patterns emerge.

The theme of the dance is continued in later paintings of 1947–8, among them the works with strange silhouetted cut-out figures, like *Untitled* (*Cut-Out*) 1948-50, and one of Pollock's most famous works *Summertime* (*Number 9*) 1948 (fig. 4.1). Here black and grey 'dancers' parade along the canvas, carried along by a maze of fine swirls and interspersed by flashes of red and yellow: a repetition accentuated by

the long thin canvas (33 inches x 18 feet). This calligraphic rhythm and pattern is eased by the impossibility of taking in such a breadth in one view; the viewer has to go with the pattern, inevitably reading from left to right as if following the whirl of the dance and the steady rhythm that is built up as the repetition proceeds. There is always movement, but this is the movement of action and reaction, and of the process(ion) not progression. Each turn of the dance is different from the last; there is no beginning or end, just a network of correlations and the topology of composition.

Repeated patterns are again seen in *Lucifer* 1947, with its striking lurid green splatters which repeat across the canvas—a rare flash of brightness within Pollock's otherwise muted palette of earthly tones. But repetition is most pronounced in one of Pollock's last, and most well known, paintings *Blue Poles* (*Number 11*) 1952 (fig. 4.2) where eight dark blue 'poles' lurch across the canvas—blocks of colour added after the layering of the dripped web and exactly printed using a wooden plank. Such patterning opens onto the problematic of a repetition that does not replicate or mimic because there is no model to feed off, and it therefore owes nothing to resemblance. When we look at what is happening on the canvas, and bearing in mind that Pollock's method is the deliberation of the manual and of the chance throw of paint, the repetition of the dance is one where difference persists. There is no ground of repetition, but each repetition engages the chance throw of paint in a movement of continuous rhythmic variation, where novel patterns and distinct images emerge in the chaosmosis of the diagram. That rhythm and that repetition are catastrophic; they are also operative and creative. In that movement of the dance, the Event unfolds.

## *Labyrinths and Folds*

In this chapter I have looked at the conditions of the Event, arguing that while Pollock's insistence on painting as a manual art in effect treats the canvas a diagram of haphazard strokes and marks. That diagram is not a chaotic preparatory work out of which an actual state of affairs is drawn by the fascinated eye. As an abstract machine, it works in the opposite direction to wreak a catastrophe on the canvas. That catastrophe is not a chaos but a chaosmosis, a "machinic heterogenesis" that, like Vertov's 'cine-eye', traverses the haphazard throw of line and colour sweeping those component marks up in the collective dance of the montage. The canvas throbs and dances, finding expression in the texture of correlation (diagrammatic virtualities) and intersections made in the movement of unfolding that is repetition.

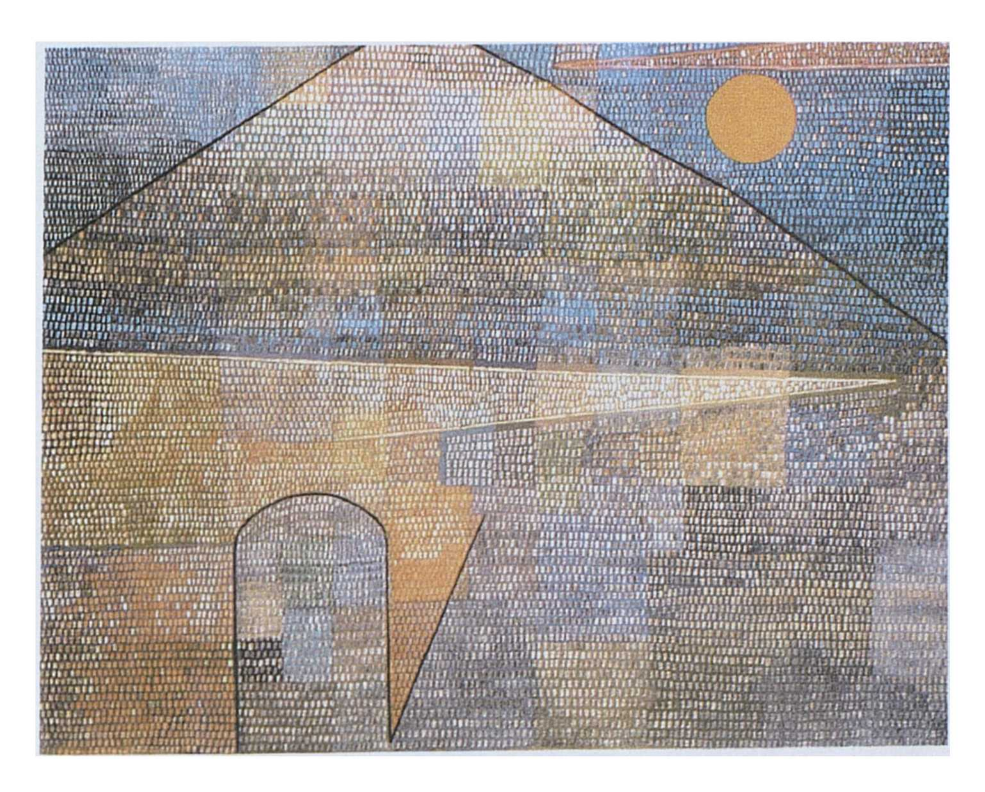
In the next chapter, on the work of Paul Klee, I go on to theorize the labyrinthine movement of the dance, and here the notion of the fold becomes important. In *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (1993a) Deleuze identifies the fold with the Baroque, and cites Klee, Dubuffet, Rauschenberg and Pollock as modern Baroque artists. Baroque art is experimental, it contorts and turns upon other formulas and develops styles that confuse different orders of time and space. There are elaborate costumes, ornate architecture, and painting that hides shape in ruffles and drapes. There are the intricate tangles of Pollock's webs. There are the spirals and twist of Klee's undulating lines. There are folds upon folds, and labyrinths. In the Baroque dance of matter, the fold animates the material of art to reveal the sensation of the material itself, an affect that in *What in Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari lyrically describe as "the smile of oil, the gesture of fired clay, the thrust of

metal, the crouch of Romanesque stone, and the ascent of Gothic stone (1991: 166). The result is a dizzying animation in which matter reveals its texture. The material of art becomes expressive matter, producing a 'form' of expression in the inflective meanders of matter. It is that vertiginous movement of inflection that we saw extracted in the Event of Pollock's seductive, bruising painting—movement which is extracted and made consistent in the music and expression of *Summertime* (*Number 9*) 1948, or *Lavender Mist* (*Number 1*) 1950 and *Autumn Rhythm* (*Number 30*) 1950. The question is how does it work? For the answer to that we turn to Klee and the "line out for a walk".

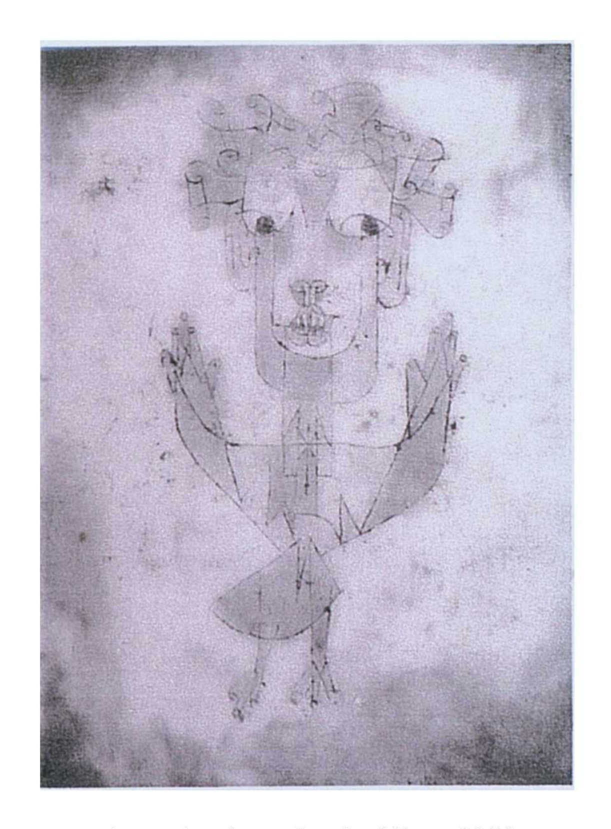
# CHAPTER 5

# PAUL KLEE

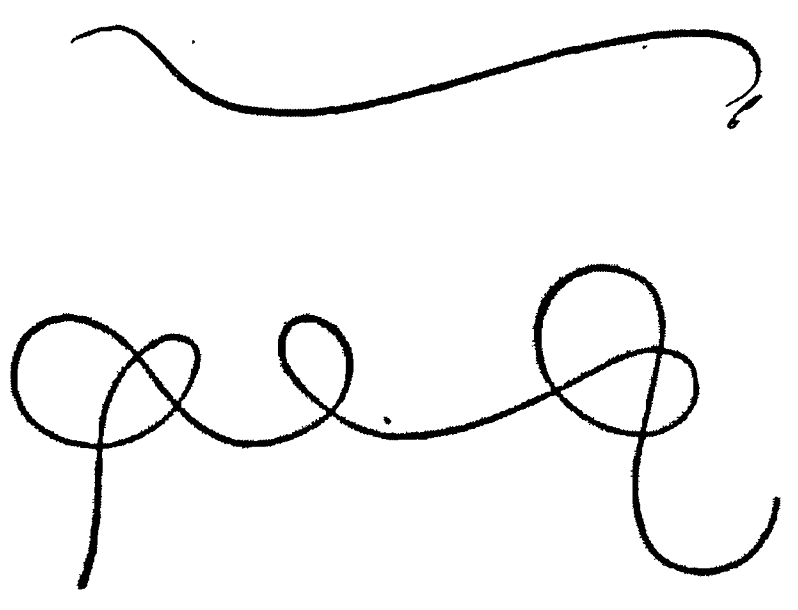
## Drawing with the Fermata



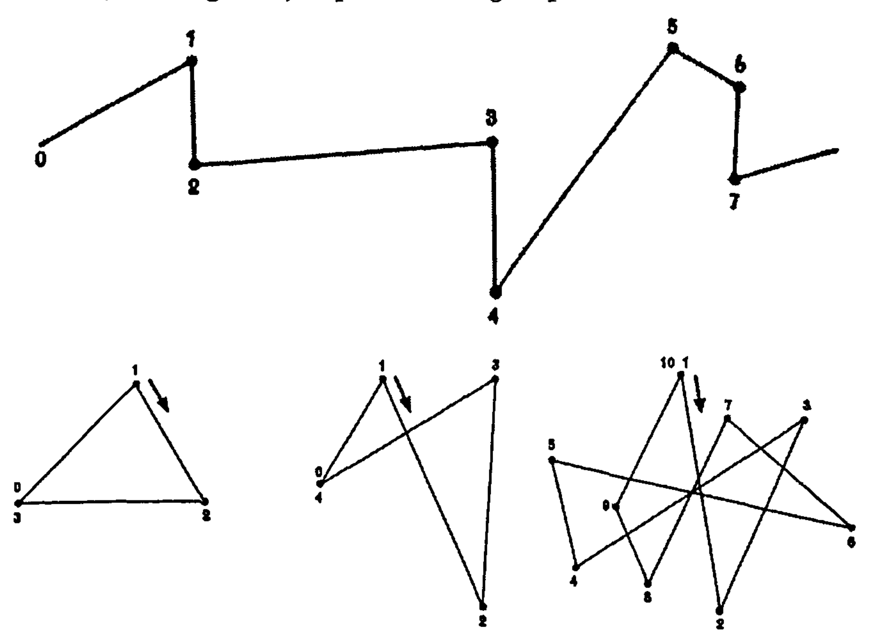
(fig. 5.1) Klee, *Ad Parnassum* 1932



(fig. 5.2) Klee, *Angelus Novus* 1920



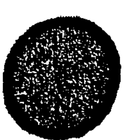
i.) moving freely, a point shifting its position forward




b.) an active line limited in movement by fixed points

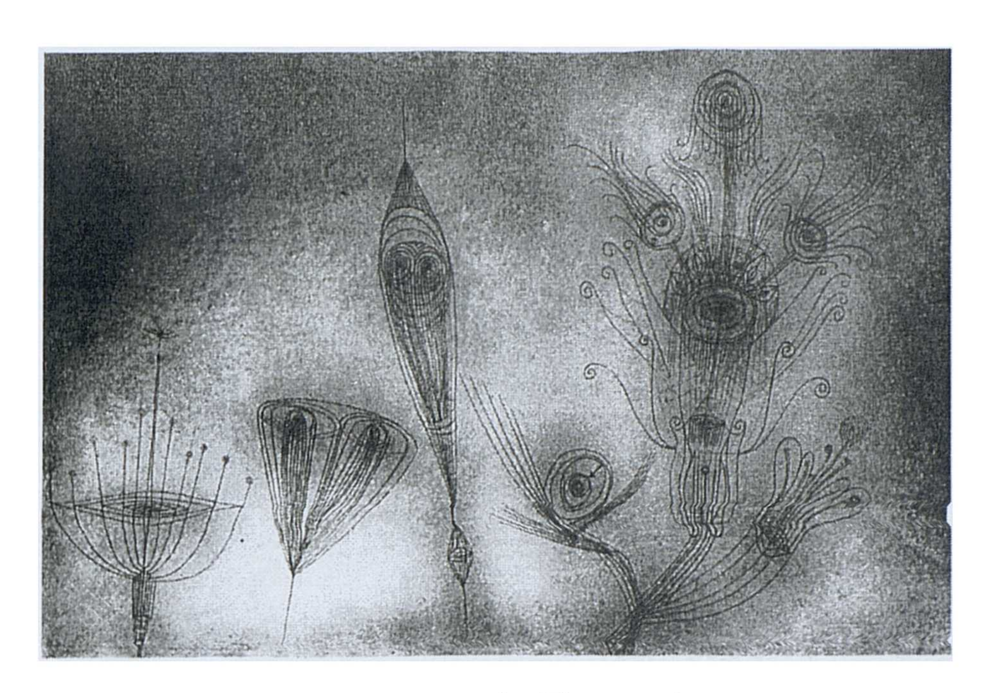






c.) the line becomes passive as a result of the activation of planes

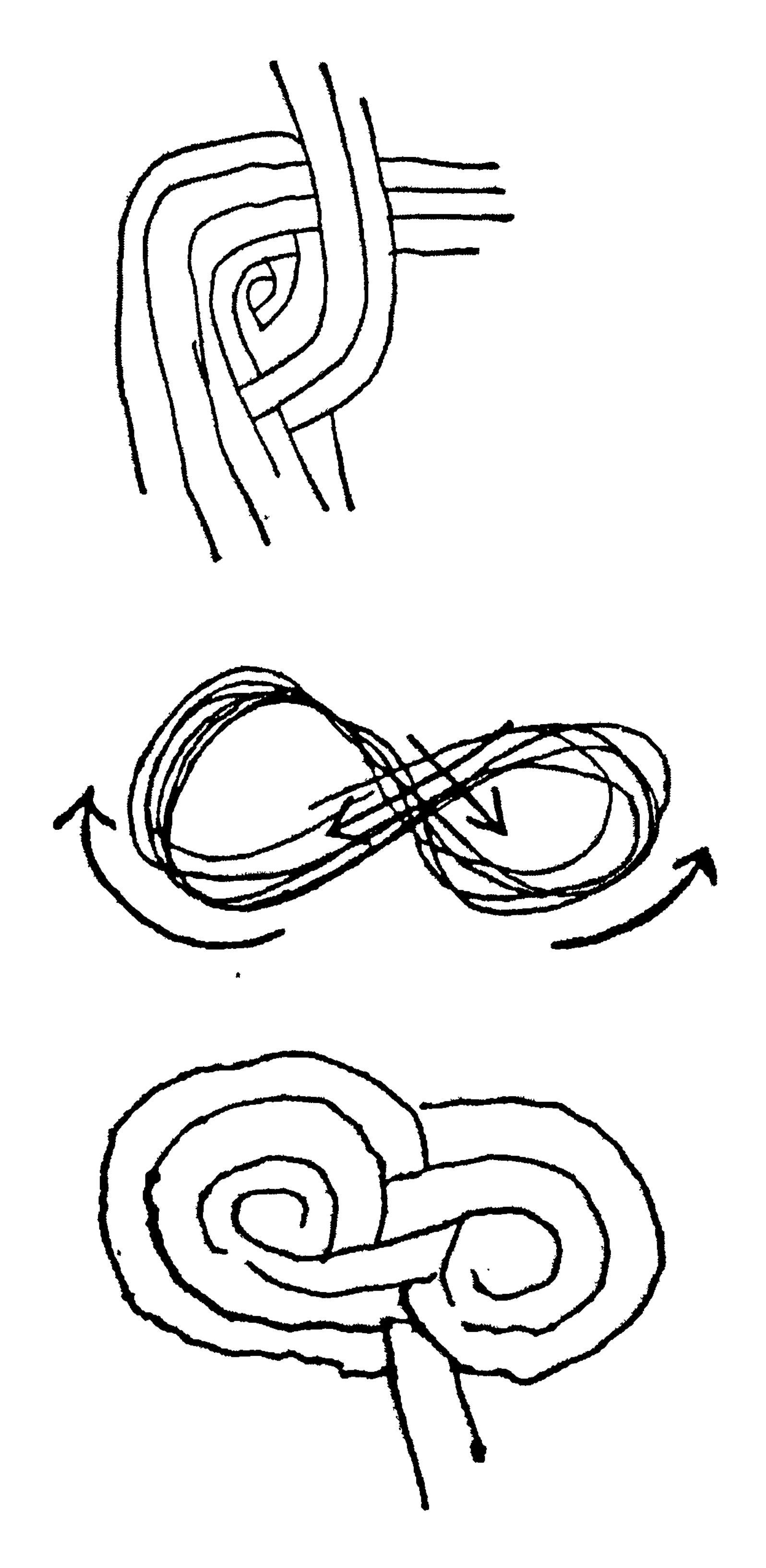
(fig. 5.3) Klee: Free, active, and passive lines.
From *The Thinking Eye* (1956: 105–13)



(fig. 5.4) Klee, *Ardent Flowering* 1927



(fig. 5.5) Klee, *Sailboats in gentle motion* 1927



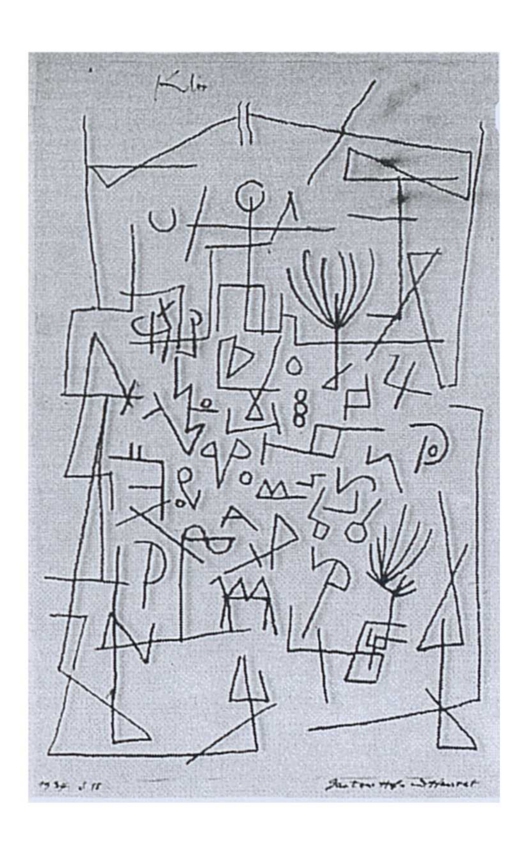
(fig. 5.6) Klee: Essence and Appearance.
From *The Thinking Eye* (1956: 35)



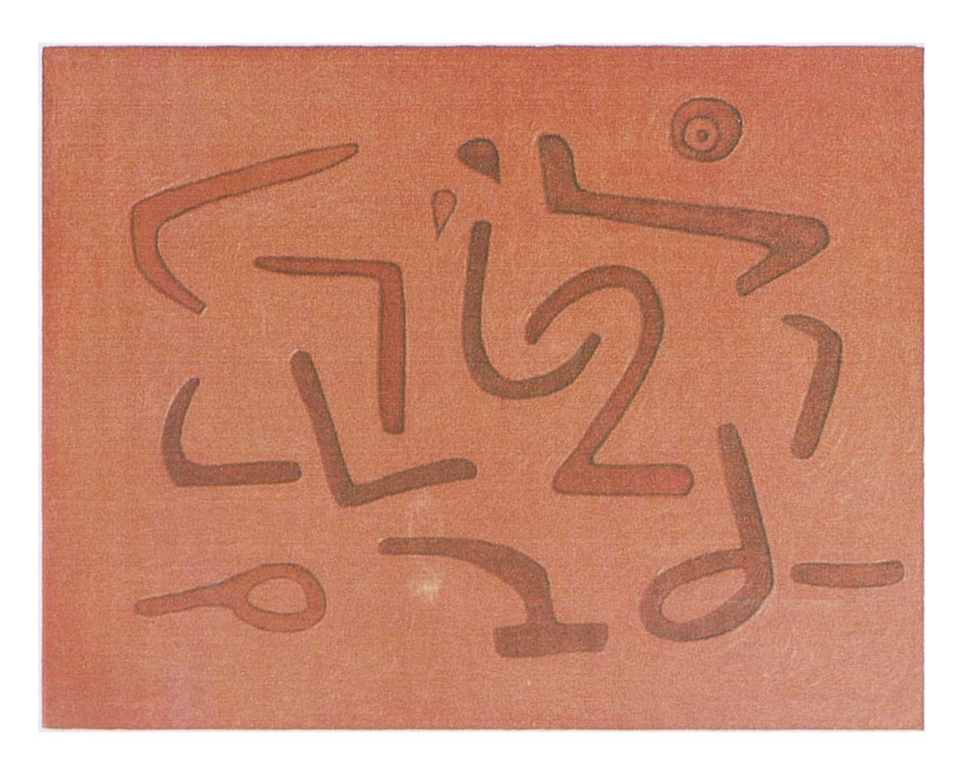
(fig. 5.7) Klee, *Pursed-lipped Lady* 1930



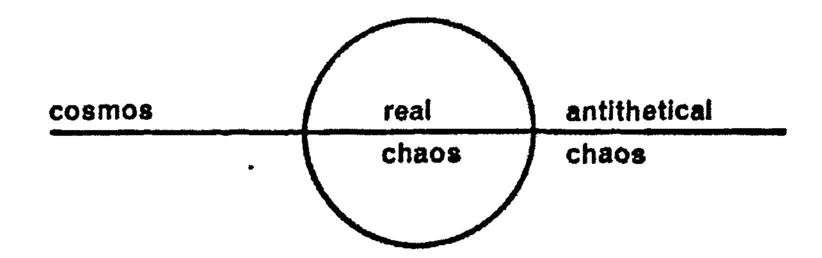

(fig. 5.8) Klee, *Town Square under Construction* 1923



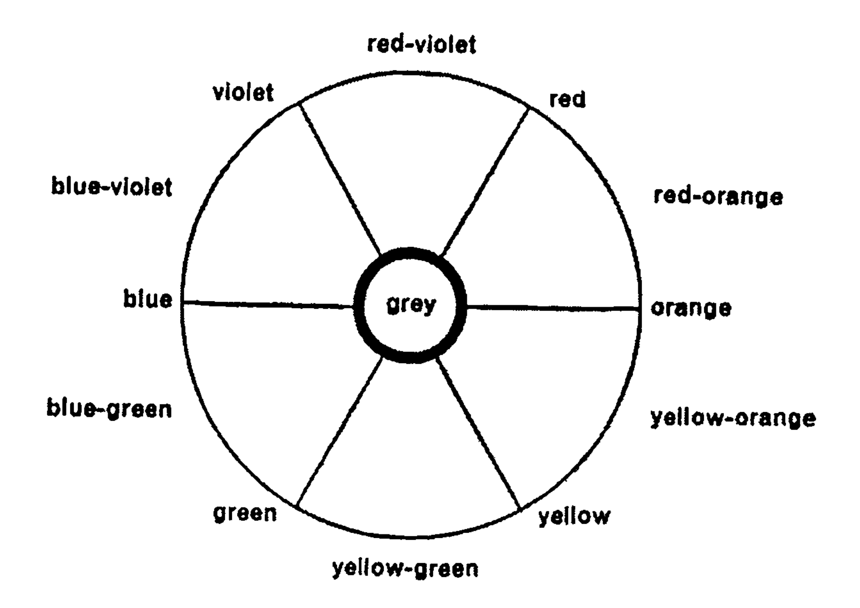
(fig. 5.9) Klee, *Garden, Yard and Homestead* 1934



(fig. 5.10) Klee, *Shattered Labyrinth* 1939

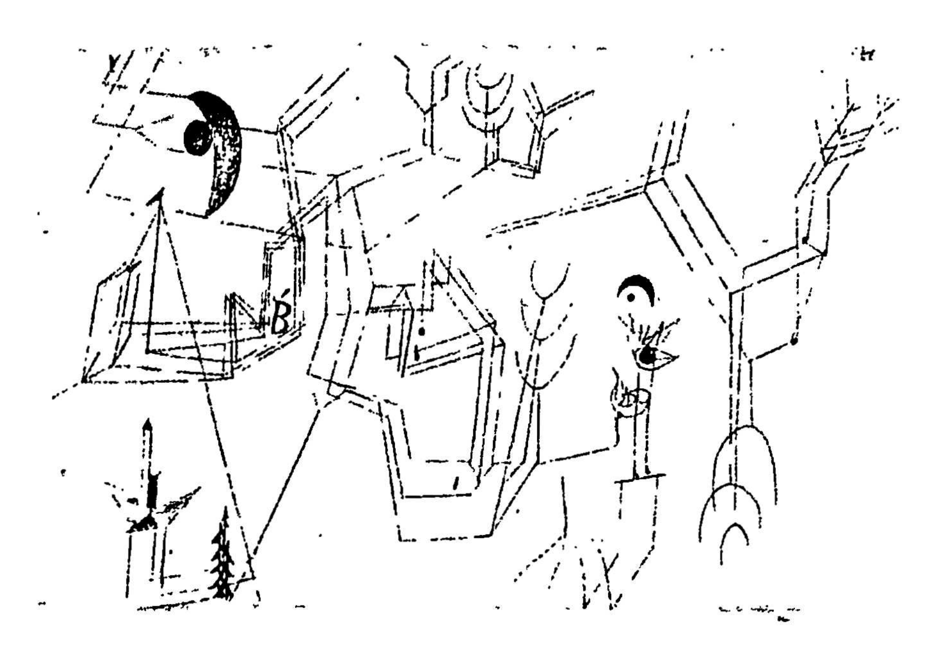



Klee: "Cosmos–Chaos"
From *The Thinking Eye* (1956: 3)

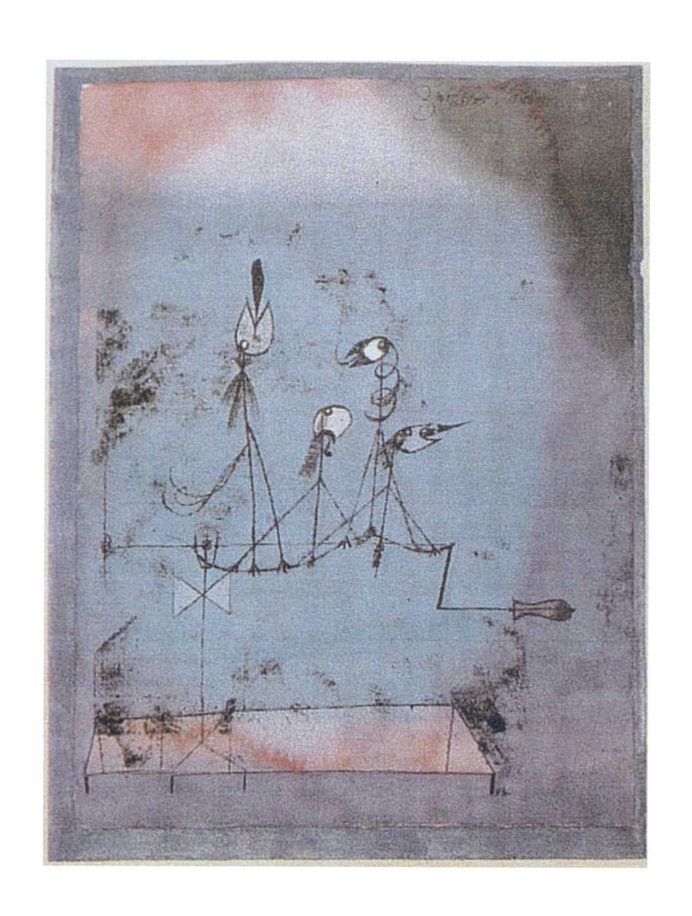



Klee: "Sum of the peripheral colours = grey."
From *The Thinking Eye* (1956: 480)

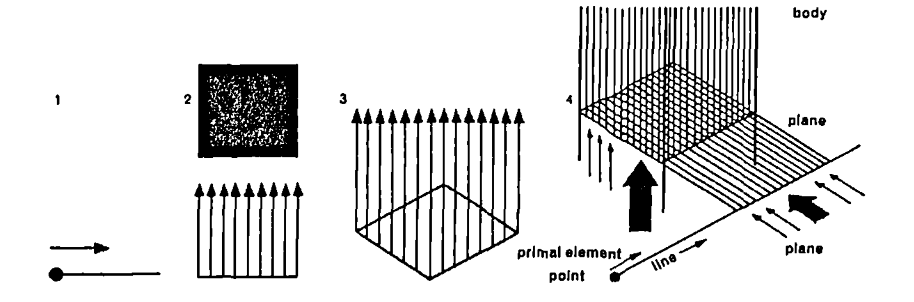
(fig. 5.11) Klee: Cosmos and Chaos.
From *The Thinking Eye* (1956: 3, 480)



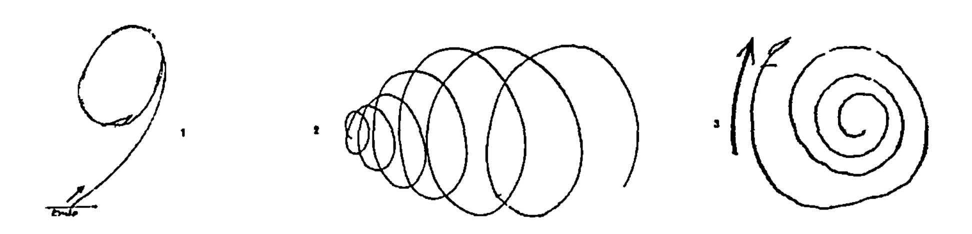
(fig. 5.12) Klee, *Drawing with the Fermata* 1918



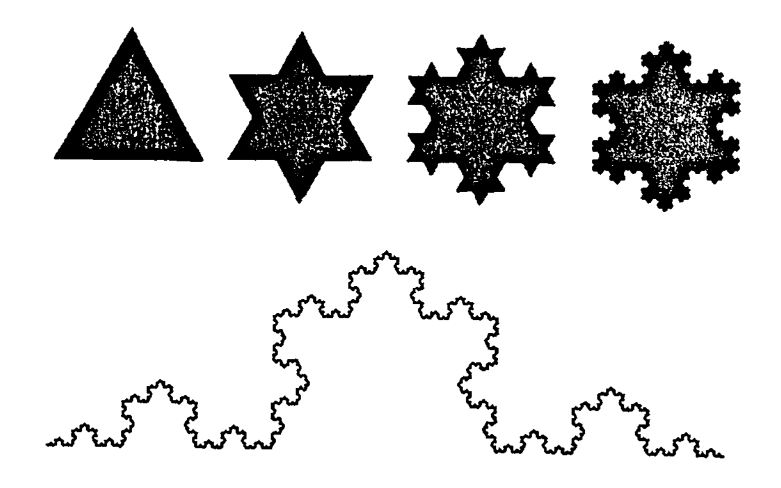
(fig. 5.13) Klee, *Twittering Machine* 1922




(fig. 5.14) Klee: Pictorial Dimensions.
From *The Thinking Eye* (1956: 24)



(fig. 5.15) Klee: The Cosmic Curve
From *The Thinking Eye* (1956: 415)



(fig. 5.16) The Koch Snowflake. (Gleick 1988: 99)

*In abstraction, reality is preserved.*

Paul Klee, *The Thinking Eye* 1922 (1956: 463)

## ***Counterpoint and Fugue***

Paul Klee's work is musical. It is described by Andrew Kagan as "polyphonic painting" and as "contrapunctual"; and by David Sylvester, as "atonal" (Kagan 1983: 47, 52; Sylvester 1997: 36). In his fascinating look at the relationship between art and music *Paul Klee: Art & Music* (1983) Kagan emphasises the multi-voiced, many-layered aspect of Klee's work; in his essays on late Klee (1937–40), reprinted in *About Modern Art* (1997) Sylvester dwells on the fact that the pictures have no centre or focus, and no fixed form. The point they both make is that Klee's painting undermines perceptual habits, and works against the optical coherence that the focal point and the framing line imply. The work has no boundaries or fixed contours. It cannot be read as a whole but is built up by, what Sylvester calls "a roving, not a static eye", and which I understood in my last chapter after Deleuze's commentary on Vertov as the non-optical, non-human 'cine-eye' or eye of matter (Sylvester 1997: 41; Deleuze 1983: 80–81). Klee sees in his own painting all the textural complexity of Mozart and argues that to read the painting the eye must see as the ear hears, build figures and harmonize colours and tonalities.[1]

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[1] Kagan's musical analogies are by no means arbitrary, Klee was an accomplished musician—teacher, critic, historian and player—and looked to Bach and Mozart, and to the eighteenth century work on music theory by Johann Josef Fux for principles governing painting (Kagan 1983: 41). In 1928 Klee wrote, "What had been accomplished in music by the end of the eighteenth century has only begun in the fine arts" (Kagan 1983: 40).

The musical term 'counterpoint' best describes Klee's defiance of 'clear and distinct' rectilinear form, and the way that he refuses subordination to the point of reference and the limitations of pictorial dimensionality. Thus Klee seems to refuse rectilinear Euclidean geometry in which the line is defined as the shortest distance between two points and where the line, limited by the points, is clear and distinct.[2] During the period 1921–1933, which culminated in the major painting *Ad Parnassum* 1932 (fig. 5.1), Klee was, on his own admission, seriously involved in trying to create work that directly paralleled the multi-dimensionality of musical form, notably counterpoint and polyphony. His Bauhaus course notes (1921–22) include examples of "drawing in two voices" and of the polyphonic treatment of colour and line, as for example *Polyphonic-abstract* 1930 against which Klee added the following definition: "Polyphony: the study of harmony, the theory of simultaneous sounds. Simultaneity of several independent themes. Polyphony as a simultaneous multi-dimensional phenomenon" (1956: 519). As Kagan points out, here Klee is influenced by the work of Robert Delaunay on simultaneity.

In his first notebook (1939), Delaunay credits Cézanne as an artist concerned with the destruction of a Renaissance tradition, a tradition governed by "the idea of spectacle, fundamentally a literary subject, which entails perspective as its means; and the idea of spaces seen from the outside—rather than space created from within" (Delaunay and Delaunay 1978: 20). It was Cézanne who, rejecting drawing and destroying perspective, "began to break up the line" and, in order to create space "from within", to experiment with colour and movement (205). As Delaunay observes in a note of October 1913, "*Color gives*

[2] See: Chapter Two for my discussion of the disruption of this formal line in Mondrian.

*depth* (not perspective, *nonsequential*, but *simultaneous*) *and form and movement*" (46). And in 1917 he bids for "Depth through an adequate craft, through relationships between color contrasts—form that is depth. (Depth that is *color and not chiaroscuro*)" (71). As in Merleau-Ponty's 'Eye and Mind' essay (1961), colour rhythms and depth (which Delaunay specifically details as duration) are tied up with a visual reality of life and movement that contrasts with understanding and the mechanical perception of geometry, and like Merleau-Ponty, Delaunay privileges art with revealing that reality (82, and note 1). In his article of 1912 'Light', reprinted in the collected writings, he implores "*Let us seek to see*" (Delaunay and Delaunay 1978: 82).[3]

Dismissing Impressionism as effect and Cubism and Symbolism as allusion, Delaunay cites Seurat as the modern artist who begins to approach painting as an art "which represents in all its purity a plastic art" (Delaunay 1978: 27). He goes on in his observations on painting to emphasis the "*Reality of Art*" as the movement of colour in painting (57). Its method is simultaneity. In a note from the early 1920s he distinguishes modern art as plastic art, and in work from 1917 develops the notion of "form-colour" as a concern with depth:

> The new art aims at the formal representation of space continuously in movement—real volumes ....
> And colors are, in their simultaneous contrasts, the marvelous means of expression for constructing movement—which they produce by their material .... (61)

Later he adds that:

[3] Dealaunay's article 'Light' (1912) was translated into German by Klee (*Der Sturm*, no. 144–45, February 1913).

Painting is above all a visual art
In depth
Without mechanical elements. (72)

Polyphonic simultaneity presents a complex understanding of the one–many relation that, with depth in mind, might be understood as a musical chord, or the internal animation of a virtual multiplicity. Delaunay makes his own connection between music and "pure painting"; he likens simultaneity to the fugue, comparing his *Windows Open Simultaneously* 1912, to the fugues of J. S. Bach (Kagan 1983: 55).[4] The comparison with 'fugue' is appropriate here because the fugue has a layered musical depth of theme and transposed repetition, and incidentally, carries the implication of flight from form because fugue is a derivation of the Latin *fugere* meaning *a running away or flight.*

A similar depth pertains in Klee's own example of "drawing in two voices" and in *Ad Parnassum* 1932 (fig. 5.1). Here, colour and line are two counter-punctual melodies working in harmony. The colour pointillism shimmers. Kagan quotes Klee as referring to his work as "so-called pointillism" as for example in a letter of March 1932 (1983: 81 note 74). Klee's pointillism does not intensify light, as in impressionism, but is a transparent layering that creates depth and carries a distinct voice. In *Ad Parnassum* 1932, as elsewhere in Klee's polyphonic paintings, the line soars. Simultaneously. The eye must 'hear' the crossings, weavings and foldings of these simultaneous soundings: building and harmonizing a multi-dimensional image. The

[4] Kagan is quoting from a review by Delaunay in *Die Alpen*, VI, 12 (August 1912), 700. Delaunay talks about painting that is purely expressive, "beyond the limits of all past styles", in 'A Note on the Construction of Reality in Pure Painting' (1913) (94–96).

precision of the coloured patchwork grid, though likened by Kagan to a musical staff, is not a ground that contains or supports the line; nor is the colour trapped within the line (Kagan 1983: 67). In the polyphonic work colour and line are read as independent themes or simultaneous voices. Colour adds another voice to the line, but in a most unconventional way.

Sylvester describes these paintings as "polychromatic chessboards" and makes the observation that because the sides of the checks (colour-blocks/points) are wavering lines instead of straight ones the 'squares' are not rectilinear but seen as oblique planes, each with its own unique slant (1997: 41). The effect is a strange vibrating depth, a "warped surface" or an "undulating façade" where, because there is no fixed perspective, depth is indeterminable (41). Klee remarks that "The depth of our surface is imaginary", and that it requires that spatial relations be organised by the eye (Klee 1956: 53, 340). Because colour is not colouring, and the line not limited by points, the eye must however take on a non-optical function and organise a polyphonic multi-dimensional and imaginary or phantastic space. But in these atonal pictures without a focal point, how is the work to be built or harmonized?

The composition is built up by the roving eye, an eye with a haptic rather than an optical function. In Klee, as for Pollock, the eye must become, what Deleuze terms the "eye of matter" and enter the work, drawing the composition by making local connections and working with the disorientation of close-vision (Deleue 1983: 82). The eye must get involved, and seduced by the matter of the canvas, construct the line of the image as it walks and dances. Sylvester recognises this function of the eye and agrees with Klee that the activity of the eye is, as in Klee's model of form production, like the active line "out for a walk" (Klee 1956: 105):

> These are pictures without a focal point. They cannot be seen by a static eye, for to look at the whole surface simultaneously, arranged about its centre – or any other point which at first seems a possible focal point – is to encounter an attractive chaos. The eye must not rest, it must allow itself to be forced away from the centre to find a point at which it can enter the composition – there are usually many such points, most of them near the edge – and so journey through the picture, 'taking a walk with a line'. (Sylvester 1997: 35) [5]

This line is precisely the line that Deleuze and Guattari describe as Gothic, nomadic and abstract (1980: 497). It is abstract because it has a multiple orientation, and is not rectified or contained by fixed points. It is an affect of "smooth space", a space with no definition or dimensions, a space of infinite and oceanic distances where new distributions and myriad compositions are always possible. There is no definite orientation, foreground or background, outlining or placing. The picture is alive to continuous variation as it figures and dances. Deleuze describes this line as a line where writing is absent, a description that recognises the line as free from the regulatory sign systems that determine the notion of writing (497).[6] This line unfolds

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[5] Here Sylvester is referring to Klee's late work, the Bern period, 1937–38 until his death in 1940.

[6] The abstract line is an affect of smooth space not a line determining space, when the line would be figurative. The abstract line draws, the figurative line writes. Deleuze and Guattari do not develop a discussion of writing here, but a tangential allusion to Derrida's work on writing cannot be dismissed. *Of Grammatology* was published in 1967, *Writing and Difference* in 1978, *A Thousand Plateaus* in 1980.

and the image is figured in the morphological production that Klee theorizes as *Gestaltung* or form production. The 'form' the picture takes is a dynamic form composed by taking a walk through the picture, unravelling or unfolding a line as one goes, creating a figure in the duration of the random walk.[7]

Deleuze and Guattari are surely thinking of Klee, perhaps even of the *Angelus Novus* 1920 (fig. 5.2), when they describe the random or nomadic line as being alive, inorganic and swirling:

> Heads unravel and coil into ribbons in a continuous process: mouths curl in spirals. Hair, clothes ... This streaming, spiralling, zigzagging, snaking, feverish line of variation liberates a power of life that human beings had rectified and organisms had confined, and which now matter expresses as the trait, flow, or impulse traversing it. (1980: 499)

The figure remains always at the point of mutation, the hair and clothes only distinguished by the trait of the twist, the curl and the fold. The hair nothing more than the curl, represented only as a trait of the line as colour and tonality. Walter Benjamin describes it thus: "A Klee painting named 'Angelus Novus' shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread" (Benjamin 1955: 249). The stance might be Medusan but the

[7] In *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari reference Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy* (1908) for their understanding of the abstract line as "Gothic or Northern" (1980: 496; Worringer 1908: 106–21). Their reference is to a 1927 edition (Putnam's and Sons) in which the chapter heading is 'Form in Gothic', 38–55.

angel is about to fly. When the eye travels with the line the angel will soar like a crescendo, spiralling eccentrically, freeing itself from the earth in infinite motion. The angel is a figure that is an affect of abstraction. Benjamin pictures the *Angelus Novus* as the angel of history. He stands in the midst of the human catastrophe of the twentieth century, about to be driven backwards "irresistibly into the future" by the storm caught in his wings; streaming, spiralling, "out for a walk" and hurtling into the unknown. With the above quotation from Deleuze and Guattari in mind, we might add that the zigzagging, feverish line liberates a power of life beyond the human and "without image".

### *"taking a walk with a line"*

Klee develops his twin theory of form production and pictorial form, which includes his famous "walk with a line", during his Bauhaus years 1921–33. His teaching notes, journal jottings and sketches from that period are collected in two handbooks of pedagogical writings, *The Thinking Eye* and *The Nature of Nature.*[8] On his own account these pedagogical works complement his pictures, and it therefore seems sensible to use these notes to bring out the philosophy in the art.

As his concern with form production suggests Klee is interested in what art produces, not what it represents. That operative function is demonstrated by Klee in his image of "taking a walk with a line". Klee describes this line variously, as linear-motion self-contained, as linear-

[8] The two section headings in *The Thinking Eye* are 'Towards a theory of form-production' and 'Contributions to a theory of pictorial form'.

active, as free, as restful and harmonious (1956: 105, 123). Musically it is the lilt of the folk-song, un-elaborate and companionable. What makes this line so easy is that it is without aim or purpose, fixed point of reference or image. Klee says that; "It goes out for a walk, so to speak, aimlessly for the sake of the walk" (105). Described as the point set in motion, this point is understood as an agent, not a stop; and the line is free, not rectilinear.

Lines, however, are not always abstract, even when 'on a walk', and under the heading 'Contribution to a Theory of *Pictorial Production*', Klee determines four different productions of the "line on a walk": the line that moves freely, a line limited by points, and the line that becomes passive by translating into the plane, and the line that is displaced by the plane (fig. 5.3) (1956: 105–13). Each line begins with the point set in motion, and the point set in motion has an unarticulated potentiality. The line is essentially free but becomes limited under certain conditions. In a progress that echoes the turn of the line in the punctual system, which in Chapter Three I described with reference to Mondrian, Klee illustrates the progressive restriction of the "line on a walk". The free line becomes restricted in movement, and therefore only "active" when subordinate to the fixed point, and becomes passive as a result of the activation of planes, until in the final figure its movement is blocked by the plane.

The line moving freely walks for a walk's sake, and is depicted as a curved and meandering line. Importantly it has no definite beginning or end, and no stops or supports. It is an abstract line, moving freely. Klee labels his figure "moving freely, a point shifting its position forward" (1956: 103). Its form is only the 'inform' of its direction, speed and rhythm, and its linear energy. It is a textural line. The second, active line is limited in its movement by the fixed point or stop. It moves from 1–2–3–4– and onwards, and in conformity with

its Euclidian geometry each leg of its journey is the shortest distance between points. Klee suggests that it is more like a series of appointments than a walk, and because it takes the most direct route between points, he sees it as hurrying rather than wandering. Klee's third and fourth examples are the passive line. This works like the active line in that there is a determined progress from one point to the next, but once the lines are joined this linearity becomes planarity and the figure is fixed. Linear energy is passified, blocked by the plane.

Under different conditions, the four modes of the line and the consequent forms result in very different figurations. Deleuze and Guattari recognise this when, in the plateau 'The Smooth and the Striated' in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), they insist that "The abstract is not directly opposed to the figurative" but rather that "The figurative or imitation and representation, is a consequence, a result of certain characteristics of the line when it assumes a given form" (1980: 497). Those certain characteristics express the conditions under which the line operates, and out of which the figure emerges or arises as a plastic formation. Like Klee, Deleuze and Guattari acknowledge different degrees of abstraction or smoothness under different conditions. The smooth and the striated are not pure spaces, but exist in mixtures where the one is translated, reversed or returned to the other. So, the smooth can be captured and enveloped by the striated, the striated dissolved into the smooth (1980: 475). The smooth—in Klee the cosmic—and the striated, which in Klee corresponds to the schematised space of defined form, are the extreme conditions of space.

At the one extreme we have the rectilinear or punctual system under which "transversals are subordinated to diagonals, diagonals to horizontals and verticals, horizontals and verticals to points", space is striated and the line describes a contour (497). At the other extreme we

have the abstract and "*a line that delimits nothing, that describes no contour*" and that works in smooth space (497–98). For Deleuze and Guattari it is the "nomadic line invested with abstraction", a line that they identify with Worringer's Gothic line because it has "the power of expression and not of form" (498). By this they mean that it does not constitute a *form of expression* that striates and organizes matter, but that it is instead a form of expression that is better understood as autogenetic figuration or creative evolution and which is "accompanied by *material traits of expression*" (498). In Klee's terms, it promotes essence and quality, not appearance and quantity. Like the fugue it is a flight from fixed form.

I like this introduction of the 'figure' into thinking about Klee's work, for two reasons. Firstly because Klee's late work, his Berne period (1933–40) to which the musical vocabulary of fugue and counterpoint most accurately applies, includes many figures—weeping woman, noisy person, loved one, clown, faces. Secondly, Klee's distinctive logic of creativity depends on the notion of *Gestaltung* as an active, performative constructivism or form-building. It is a word that holds onto the active connotation of building, and the pro-active connotation of figuration as figuring. Again the accent is on time, change, and the line of emergence.

With his image of "taking a walk with a line" Klee explores the principle of composition for an art that refers only to an operative function. As we will see later, that function is a creative evolution. The line is a "random line" without beginning or end, and goes out for a walk, its power of expression and its figuration emerging in the duration of that movement. In Bergson's terms it "brings with it that unforeseeable nothing which is everything in a work of art … it creates itself as form" (Bergson 1911: 341). And here in Bergson we have the notion of form that requires autogenesis, a form of expression and figuration that becomes so important in Klee's notion of *Gestaltung*.

## *Gestaltung*

In a short article from 1948, entitled 'Auguries of Experience', David Sylvester explains the subtlety of Klee's move to function as a move from a concern with appearance and object, to a concern with the conditions of existence, saying that "Klee was concerned not so much with objects as with the conditions under which they exist and the forces which act in and upon them. This indeed is the burthen of all Klee's writings" (1997: 46).

Sylvester interprets this passage as Klee being less concerned with the objects that are experienced as with the process of experiencing them. This emphasis on experience must be understood in the context of Klee's own concern with movement and change. Sylvester suggests that we experience Klee's pictures by journeying through them, thus making novel associations and finding strange resemblances between the signs scattered across the canvas. I go on to discuss the analogy of the journey in the next section. However, here I want to argue that in his own theorization of function Klee is concerned with the processes of form and with creation rather than with the conditions of experience. Klee contrasts "living form"—the metalogic of the smile for instance—with the formalism of the exact, and the 'magic of life' with the 'magic of experience' (Klee 1956: 60). This would point to the concern with the conditions under which objects exist as a concern with the principles of composition and not with experience as Sylvester supposes.

In *The Thinking Eye* Klee insists on the word *Gestaltung* for his theory of pictorial form, rejecting the more usual *Formlehre*, in order to point up figuration as a theory of morphological form production that "emphasises the paths to form rather than form itself", and which

"clearly contains the idea of an underlying mobility" (Klee 1956: 17).[9] *Gestaltung* is an experimental creative figuration (17, 21). Klee defines *Gestalt* as "over against form", emphasizing creativity as a practice of formation and "form-making", in contrast to the more static *Formlehre* "theory of form" or "form-deciding", and interestingly in the light of his polarisation of earth as death and the cosmos as life, he notes *Gestalt* as 'living being', and *Form* as '*nature morte*' (17).

Klee uses the word "genesis" to explain *Gestaltung* (1956: 17). He splits genesis into two phases, which he maps onto the primordial masculine and the primordial feminine: "Genesis as formal movement is the essence of the world of art. In the beginning the motif, harnessing the energy, sperm. Work as form-making in the material sense: primordial feminine. Work as form-deciding sperm: primordial masculine" (17). He also points to centripetal forces as 'feminine', and centrifugal forces as 'masculine' (23). Perhaps wisely, Klee does not develop this problematic polarity. As I read the work, the oppositional structure is a tenuous starting point. What is more interesting is how Klee works the tension *between* and beyond opposites.

The important point is that the form or figure emerges, or arises, within the creative process and, in that sense, exists in itself as a harmonization of a few colours and tonalities, and the building of figures. So although Klee himself refers to *Gestaltung* as a "genesis" or even a "cosmogenesis", and though the fundamental interiority of that process makes it an autogenetic process, the emphasis on form-making as a creative practice points to *Gestaltung* as a movement that resonantes with Guattari's notion of "machinic heterogenesis", which I discussed in reference to the movement of Pollock's "all-over"

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[9] See Chapter Three note 10, of this thesis where I compare Klee's method of *Gestaltung* with Mondrian's Neo-Plasticism [*de nieuwe beeldung*].

canvases (Klee 1956: 17, 22, 415).

Klee's description of the cosmogenetic moment reiterates O'Connor's description of Pollock's work; it is "Suns, radiation, rotation, explosion, movements of fireworks, sheaves" (Klee 1956: 22; O'Connor 1977: 52). This affinity between the machinic and Klee is confirmed when in his sustained study of the Event *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (1993a), Deleuze references Klee as a modern Baroque painter, and himself uses the word *Gestaltung*, describing the fold as "producing a form of expression, a *Gestaltung*, the genetic element [*l'élément génétique*] or infinite line of inflection, the curve with a unique variable" (35 [49]).[10]

For Klee, form emerges from the material and action of painting, and because that performance hinges on what he terms "ideal, intangible" qualities—line, tone, value and colour—and not on the quantative "material"—wood, metal, glass and so on—painting must be understood as performing rather than conforming (1956: 17). *Gestaltung* thus seems to work on the same level as machinic heterogenesis, and be similarly concerned with the correlation of diagrammatic virtualities, the tensions and intersections in the work, and with the way that, in the movement of genesis (the fold), the material become expressive matter. That expression is informed, abstract and non-representational, not because it defies form, but because the form is not predetermined—there is no poetic mood or an idea as a starting point, just the pen or the manual throw of paint and autopoiesis.

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[10] As well as Klee, Deleuze cites Fautrier, Dubuffet, and Bettencourt, as modern Baroque painters. Delaunay is the obvious omission.

Klee's own understanding of painting as a creative form production is very close to Bergson's idea of painting as a creative evolution. I focused on the importance of the artist as a truly creative practitioner in Chapter One, when talking about the affinities between art and philosophy as disciplines that think "without image". There I specifically referenced *Creative Evolution* (1911) and the analogy that Bergson makes between the work of art and creative evolution. Creative evolution, like the work of art is a free action: "it transcends finality, if we understand by finality the realization of an idea conceived or conceivable in advance" (Bergson 1911: 224). Because Klee's art begins with practice—the point set in motion—and not with the idea or pre-given image, there is the same notion of the work of art as "unforeseeable and new" that there is in Bergson (1911: 340–41). Both talk about the form sprouting and flowering, and both see form unfolding through time, indeed Klee is most explicit about this noting that, "[For] space is also a temporal concept", something graphically depicted in the aptly titled watercolour *Ardent Flowering* 1927 (fig. 4.4) in which strange figures bloom in bursts of diverging lines (Klee 1956: 340).

Bergson's emphasis on art as free action—he talks about painting in particular—highlights two aspects of the creative process that are also important to Klee: essence and time. The idea that the emergence of form is stretched out in duration as a "creative evolution" has implications for the idea of essence. Thus Bergson finds that, "The sprouting and flowering of this form are stretched out on an unshrinkable duration, which is one with their essence" (1911: 341). Klee similarly wants to turn art from a preoccupation with appearance to the contemplation of essence, and sets the vitality of essence against the *statis* of optical appearance.

The naming of that experiential but material force as "essence" and

its contrast with "appearance" would at first seem to situate Klee within a Platonic frame, but what is interesting here is that Klee, endorsing a mystical cosmogenesis, interprets essence as a primal impulse, a force which he articulates in terms of movement and growth, and not as a transcendental reality or as an original Idea or image. This move to an ontology of becoming enables him to contrast movement with *statis*, and quality with quantity, and therefore to develop a logic of creativity where the only criteria is an immanent movement. In a section headed 'Objects of nature investigated in regard to their inner being. Essence and Appearance', Klee states both that "What we are after is not form, but function", and that "Art is the transmission of phenomena, projection of the hyper-dimensional, a metaphor for procreation, divination, mystery" (1956: 59–60). The editor of *The Thinking Eye*, Jürg Spiller, notes that whereas in the first version of this text Klee emphasises the problems of 'function' and the 'creative', in the second version he focuses on the balance between 'exact knowledge' and 'intuition'. It is interesting that Klee echoes Bergson in associating 'function' and the 'creative' with 'intuition'.

The "metalogic"—Klee's word—of hyper-dimensional and creative production stands against the formalism of distinct fabricated forms like squares, circles, triangles, domes, cubes … and is concerned with "all the seductions between good and evil" (1956: 60). Here in Klee, as in Pollock, we find the notion that the work of art is to seduce or perhaps to bruise, and that its domain is sensation and not representation. The scent, the gaze, and the smile are Klee's own examples of art's contemplations; interesting choices in the light of Bacon's later struggle with the cry and the smile, which I come to in the next chapter.

How to represent, or perhaps better, picture things, becomes then a question of essence rather than appearance, but it is an essence

predicated on a creative impulse and the processes leading to form. Klee writes,

> Representation according to essence, contrasted with representation according to appearance or with physical and spatial penetration. Accent on the processes leading to the form. (1956: 383)

For Klee quality is the ultimate in individual human experience, and his task is to carry that experience into the conceptual, "rendering visible" the essence of experience that is masked by the preoccupation with quantity in the industrial world, but which he thinks remains embedded in the unconscious. He gives a certain privilege to art and painting in particular, believing that to bring this inherent quality of experience to visibility demands pictorial symbolism or pictorial thinking because it would otherwise be limited by the use of preconceived forms with its assumptions of quantitative relations. In the pictorial, quality emerges directly out of the work of painting and the walk of the line. For Klee, the problem of form is not a question of spatial representation but of emergent figuration. Thus essence functions, not as a ground but as an indeterminable immanence, and the creative force of *Gestaltung*.

*Gestaltung* carries the power of creativity, life and movement, and it is the essence of this power that Klee wishes to make visible. His aim is to move towards its source and to make it known through matter, in real and living form—"it is thus that matter takes on life and order" (17, 463). Like Bergson, Klee understands essence as invisible but real and demonstrates it as a virtual multiplicity and an event. Conceived in terms of both substance and duration, essence creates the work in which it is expressed, and it is that reality which is preserved in plastic art. It is not an art of copying or reproduction but of abstraction and

the art of "transformation and new creation" (460). Klee recognizes that to make visible this essence is a metamorphosis—"we cross a boundary of reality"—and, as Bergson does, finds in that movement the creation and production of differences (1956: 460; Deleuze 1966: 98).

Here Klee departs from the mathematical formalism of the Bauhaus where he taught from 1921–31, despite supporting the qualitative values central to the Bauhaus programme—to develop the possibilities of an industrial age without precluding creativity and freedom. Klee understands the move from punctuality to process in terms of reduction and distillation, advising that "it becomes necessary to reduce the conglomeration of quantitative phenomena which fill the universe and human existence" (1956: 14–16). He interprets process in humanistic terms as a move to a full consciousness of the value of existence, and that means revealing the essential masked by quantitative forms. My Bergsonian reading of this turn to essence is that, because it takes creativity seriously and works within the ontology of becoming, it effects the dissolution of solid forms and a turn to a logic of fluids and gases. As my discussion of Pollock in Chapter Four showed, that effect is explosive rather than reductionist.

The idea that the work of art evolves or unfolds through the work of painting means that time becomes an issue for the artist. This is something that Klee takes on board when for instance, in a diary entry of 1917, he remarks that "Polyphonic painting is superior to music in that, here, the time element becomes a spatial element. The notion of simultaneity stands out even more richly", and in 1922 when he describes structure as the handmaiden of movement, "Articulation in time and in different kinds of movement gives rise to different orders

of magnitude" (Kagan 1983: 57; Klee 1956: 302).[11] So, in a sketch like *Sailboats in gentle motion* 1927 (fig. 5.5) or in the oils, *Four Sailboats* 1927 and *At Anchor* 1932 the essence of the boat is its sailing, the time and movement of its drift with the sea. The rhythmic to and fro of the tacking line traverses matter and generates the "representation according to essence" of the sailboat in gentle motion, and the appearance of the boat is resisted by the impulse of the waves. In each work, the 'experience', and essence, of the boat is its sailing and we see, in pictorial thinking, matter expressing the flow traversing it. The relaxed rhythms and the movement of the sea and boat are what count. Different rhythms engender different appearances.

Klee distinguishes the work of art as a practice that reveals an essential vitality. Like Bergson, he understands essence as continuous through the growth of the work, and wants to turn the study of appearance to the art of contemplating "unoptical impressions and representations" (Klee 1956: 63). Reading this notion of essence as a non-optical multiplicity gives it a function that echoes the non-optical function of the eye sought by Deleuze in the movement of *close vision–haptic space* where the space is mapped by the acentred movement of the "eye of matter".[12] Instead of a space focused on the privileged point of view we have an a-centred 'depth' and, as I will explain, an (*n*–*1*) dimensional space—for Klee it is "hyper-dimensional"—and find form emerging in the complex folding of the montage. In *The Fold* the montage or multiplicity is described by Deleuze as having many folds, and it is the fold that affects materials and which because it becomes

[11] Kagan is quoting from Klee's Diaries (no. 1081), 374.

[12] The mathematical 'function' is a relation or mapping between two sets in a many–one relation. There is also the hint of activity and even of the

expressive matter "produces a form of expression, a *Gestaltung* ..." (1993a: 35).

### *Pleats and Folds*

I earlier described Pollock's "all-over" canvases as labyrinths because of their intricate tangle of lines. Deleuze opens *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* with the motif of the labyrinth, returning to etymology to define the labyrinth as "multiple because it contains many folds", reminding the reader that the multiple does not have many parts but is what is folded in many ways (Deleuze 1993a: 3). He goes on to find the condition of the Event in the virtual multiplicity of the folds of matter. The smallest element of the labyrinth is the fold, which Deleuze understands in mathematical terms as "a simple extremity of the line" and as a variable curve (6). The characteristic of the fold is that it is a line that is not subordinate to the point, but which is an abstract line with free movement, and which therefore functions as a molecular and 'gaseous' component of the multiple labyrinth. There are no straight (punctual) lines and no points in the continuity of the labyrinth, just the collective dance of the stroke and the mark, "Folds seem to be rid of their supports—cloth, granite or cloud—in order to enter an infinite convergence" (34).

In my discussion of Guattari's book *Chaosmosis* (1992) and the notion of "machinic heterogenesis" in Chapter Four, I described the infinite convergence of the fold in the "collective dance", a movement where what is operative is the correlation and tension between diagrammatic virtualities that work as links or turns in the folds of the

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explosion of the form in the etymology of 'function, from latin *fungi*, to perform of discharge.

dance. The nature of the manual painting as an abstract and autogenetic machine means that that *inbetween* is indefinite/indefinite and functions as a point of inflection. Inflection is the virtual energic force of the fold, and determined by Deleuze in *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* as "the ideal genetic element of the variable curve or fold" and as "the pure Event of the line or of the point, the Virtual, ideality par excellence" (Deleuze 1993a: 14, 15).

As we saw in the last chapter, with the manual throw Pollock returns painting to the raw matter of its material. Using Bergson's example of painting as a creative evolution, we can see that such a return to matter corresponds to the starting point of the work of art; "Nought as matter, it creates itself as form" (Bergson 1911: 341). Pollock's "all-over" canvases, such as *Summertime (Number 9)* 1948 (fig. 4.1) or *Autumn Rhythm (Number 30)* 1950, are a complex labyrinth of strokes and marks, and an intense dizzying cacophony of shooting lines and splashes of colour. Their novelty as 'form' arises from the force produced in the modulation of the material configuration. What is important is the manner in which that matter is amassed, and the plastic or machinic forces of that endogenous convergence. In Klee's work, such as *Salboats in gentle motion* 1927 (fig. 5.5), the force of the painting is produced in the texture and movement—the walk—of the line.

In *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (1993a) Deleuze identifies the movement of convergence as pleats and folds, an operative function that he associates with the Baroque. He calls machinic forces the "pleats of matter", pleats that are "defined in respect to the matter that they organise" (1993a: 12). Those pleats reveal the textures of matter; for instance, the different rhythms and melodies produced across the landscape, as in *Ad Parnassum* 1932 (fig. 5.1) for example, where the different densities of colour and mark produce 'light' and 'dark'

rhythms.

Deleuze, here talking about folds of fabric in Baroque work, and about Helga Heinzen's contemporary paintings of striped and folded fabrics, describes this level of materiality as a "theater of matter" (1993a: 37). Like a theatre it is the setting of an event. What it envelops is the immaterial animation that makes matter expressive; after all what is expressed has no existence outside its expression (35). This concern with conditions and the genesis of the figure is echoed in Deleuze's reading of Baroque art as abstract art [*l'art informel*], and his insistence that abstraction—Klee, Fautrier, Dubuffet, Bettencourt—is not opposed to (creative, evolutionary) form; "abstraction [*l'informel*] is not a negation of form: it posits form as folded, existing only as a «mental landscape» .... Material matter [*Les matières*] is the ground [*le fond*], but folded forms are styles or manners" (35 [49–50]).

Imagining the labyrinth of matter as a Baroque house with two interconnecting levels, Deleuze distinguishes two different articulations of production: the amassing of matter and the animation of matter. On the one hand we have the labyrinthine meander of matter and the chaos of strokes and marks, on the other hand we have the "folds of fire", the invisible and immaterial force that animates the material, dizzying it and bringing the 'body' of the work alive, so that it functions as an operative chaosmosis (30).[13] Deleuze calls this 'upper' level "the folds in the soul" (14–26). It seems that the interiority conferred on matter by the move to abstraction, wrought by a return

[13] Deleuze has Tintoretto and *Last Judgement* 1560–62 in mind here. He divides the painting into two levels; the lower level shows tormented bodies "their souls stumbling, bending and falling into meanders of matter", the upper level attracts them like "folds of fire bringing their bodies alive, dizzying them ... (1993a: 30).

to the manual and to Action Painting, provokes a curious dizzying movement of inexact convergence. We saw that movement in Guattari's collective dance and in Pollock's vibrant "all-over" canvases where what is operative is the correlation and tension *between* components, novel intersections that work as links or turns in the dance of matter. The *inbetween* is the fold, and it is in the movement of the fold that the material is animated and becomes expressive matter. The fold is an operative function—the operative function to which the Baroque refers—that produces a form or figuration (3, 34). That "form of expression" is defined by Deleuze as a *Gestaltung*.

Painting must not only confront the 'pleats of matter' and therefore of the *material* of expression, but those pleats—the molecular components and matter of the material—must harness the immaterial and energetic forces *between* those components. That *between* is identified by Deleuze as the fold and as the Event of the line. In Klee that Event is rendered visible in the walk of the random line.

## Procreation and Divination

With the preceding discussion in mind, it seems appropriate to understand *Gestaltung* more in terms of the Deleuzian material–force, than matter and form. What counts is the energy of the line and its manner and style—forces, densities and intensities (Deleuze and Guattari 1980: 343). With metaphors of flowering and fruitfulness in mind, Klee describes the process of genesis:

> The point sets itself in motion and an essential structure grows, based on figuration. The end is only a part of what is essential (the appearance). True essential form is a

synthesis of figuration and appearance. (1956: 21)

The point set in motion is a key concept in Klee's theory of *Gestaltung* and the notion of the emergent figure, and one that I will comeback to later in the chapter. However, what is important to focus on here is that Klee goes on to represent the movement of emergence in his knotty sketches where the problematic thought of correlative oppositions is visualised (fig. 5.6). These examples are labelled 'Representation according to essence (movement and growth)' and 'Synthesis of essence and appearance (interpenetration, interlacing)'. The corresponding painting is the watercolour *Ardent Flowering* 1927 (fig. 5.4), which I mentioned earlier. Here strange filigree forms bloom in the performance of movement, growth, interpenetration and interlacing and appearance of a form of expression conditioned by the rhythm and material–force of the abstract line. Flowers blossom in twists and curls, and swirl into intense complex heads, which look remarkably like the loops and spirals of the strange attractors which Edward Lorenz would map in 1963 in his work on the chaotic rotation of turbulence in fluids.[14]

The question of material-force confronts the double articulation of *Gestaltung* as a figuration of expression. In *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari approach the notion of material–forces through a discussion of the work of art, recalling the thermal and magnetic forces, and the folds of the landscape in Cézanne, the weight of the potato sack in Millet (1980: 342–43). What they identify in these artists is that the work of art, here already understood in machinic terms as an

[14] Lorenz's work demonstrates the apparent contradiction of a deterministic chaos where, as in the whirlpool, the turbulence of dissipative systems is squeezed and folded into the intense whirl of a strange attractor. See: Gleick 1987: 121–153.

"assemblage", no longer confronts forms and matters, or themes but instead takes on the value of pure material so that "the essential thing" is force, density and intensity—weight or gravitation. The Cézannian landscape or the peasant's sack in Millet has an individuated existence through the non-visual, virtual forces of the multiple folding that it harnesses. In this way Deleuze and Guattari draw a parallel between art and philosophy of the "modern age"; Klee is their example from art, Nietzsche the philosopher in question. Using Klee's own vocabulary, they explain that the essential relation for those disciplines is no longer matter–form (or substance–attribute) but material–force, and that this is a move from a philosophy of earthly things to Cosmic philosophy. The material of modern painting is deterritorialized and molecularized matter, but its concern is not the chaos of the earth, but the forces of an "immaterial, nonformal and energetic Cosmos" (342). In other words the visible must capture the invisible ("nonvisible forces"). As Klee clearly states in his 'Creative Credo' (1920), "Art does not reproduce the visible but makes visible" (1956: 76–79). He immediately links that statement of intent to abstraction because in 'making-visible' graphic art produces forms without losing the identity of its own material elements—its calligraphic character, and the rhythm, life and order of its genesis (77).

In his 'General Review' (1922), Klee reiterates the importance of abstraction as an art that keeps hold of genesis, creativity and formation over the analytical determination which is "the organization of differences into a unity, the combination of organs into an organism" (1956: 449). In contrast to such pre-determination, abstraction is "all affirmation" and "absolute" (463). It is not in the theoretical structure of the piece but exists in and for itself, is there or not there (463). It is that reality that is preserved in art. He concludes by returning to the aim of art as "making-visible":

> In summing up we may say: Something has been made visible which could not have been perceived without the effort to make it visible. Yes, you might see something, but you would have no exact knowledge of it. But here we are entering the realm of art; here we must be very clear about the aim of 'making-visible'. Are we merely noting things seen in order to remember them or are we trying to reveal what is not visible? Once we know and feel this distinction, we have come to the fundamental point of artistic creation. (454)

The task of art becomes to "*render visible*", not as Deleuze and Guattari remind us, to render or to reproduce *the visible* (1980: 342). Deleuze and Guattari thus define modern painting, and philosophy, as "*a material of capture*" (342).

Klee himself recognises *Gestaltung* as a method that dissolves form in order to return to movement and matter when he notes that it "preserves almost physical vitality" (1956: 16). In the same gesture he dismisses the distinction between the real and the imaginary, a distinction already overturned in the imaginary or phantastic spaces revealed in Mondrian's work. As such Klee is implicitly fitting in with Deleuze's understanding of the virtual as real but not actual. That same virtuality seems to pertain in Klee's notion of *Gesaltung*, a theory of form production in which "it is no longer admissible to draw any distinction between an object which is real and one that is imaginary, each image, being a moment of experience and of existence, is no longer a fixed and detached representation but preserves almost physical vitality" (Klee 1956: 16). That moment of existence is an *Erlebnis*, an experiential structure or way of being, which has a certain rhythm or life force. Klee's experiments with rendering visible this force in a series of sketches entitled 'Rhythms in nature' (1956: 268).

Here the flow of the pen and ink line resonates with the rhythm of movement in exhalation/inhalation, walking, blood circulation or day and night, and the images emerge from the rhythm of the line to "render visible" the physical vitality of immaterial animation and the experience of the movement. They are abstract figurations that emerge in duration, movement and the journey of becoming.

Physical vitality and the force of the line seem particularly strong in the major work *Pursed-lipped Lady* 1930 [*Versiegelte Dame* 1930] (fig. 5.7) where Klee utilises the continuous line and where the form of the figure is determined and materialized in the movement of that line, a movement echoed in the German title in the prefix *ver-* with its implications of change, dissolution and disappearance. The stern, almost catatonic attitude of the *Pursed-lipped Lady* 1930 is a specific magnitude of the meandering lines: lines which unfold out of the, ironically, open 'red point' of the pursed sealed lips, as if the mouth is ready to spew, a fold bursting with anticipation. These free lines figure the face, the expression of which refers to the expectant pout of the lip. As with the Bacon portraits, which I discuss further in the next chapter, the face disappears through the mouth; what emerges is an attitude—haughtiness. Despite the strange perspective, and a passing resemblance to Picasso's later painting *Woman in a Fish Hat* 1942, the resulting portrait is quite different from the multi-perspectival, and spatial, cubist take. Here there are no fixed dimensions, and despite the remnant of a humanist determining logic in the defining contour or 'crust' (here the quiff), Klee's work remains a radical experiment with the possibilities of creative figuration and the self-generating image.

## *Journeys*

Klee describes the task of 'making-visible' by drawing a topological

plan and taking a journey with a line as it spirals, arches, zig-zags ... (1956: 76). He thus demonstrates the key principle of abstract art: that "All becoming is based on movement ... [f]or space itself is a temporal concept" (78). Two examples serve to make the point. *Town square under construction* 1923 (fig. 5.8) (a watercolour with pen and ink sketch) is ostensibly a plan, with buildings clustered along a graphic free line—exactly the curving sweep of the pen that uses to illustrate the active line on a walk, in the 'Bauhaus Book', *Pedagogical Sketchbook* of 1925. The perspective is strange in its variability, even if the arrow to the bottom right is taken as a suggested subject position.

As I quoted Sylvester saying, earlier in this chapter, Klee's pictures lack a focal point and demand that, in order to avoid encountering a chaos, the eye must enter the composition (Sylvester 1997: 35). To make any sense of the simultaneous perspectives in *Town square under construction* 1923 (fig. 5.8), the eye must travel along the road of the line, and take a walk through the square, organizing and imagining. In this particular piece the free line is literally there in the work, but in the later landscapes it is the eye itself that creates the trajectory of the line. Take *Garden, Yard and Homestead* 1934 [*Garten, Hof und Hausrat* 1934] (fig. 5.9), enter through a gap or a gate, and wander, explore and discover. This may be a cliché, but every visit will reap new delights to the eye as it moves with both constraint and freedom.

Jean-Clet Martin, writing about quite other constructions in his essay on ecclesiastical architecture, pilgrimages and relics 'Cartography of the Year 1000: Variations on A Thousand Plateaus', is also forced to think of journeying: pilgrimages and crusades, but also transversals, vectors and flight (1994: 265–88). Martin acknowledges the influence of Georges Duby's volume *L'Europe du Moyen-Age* (1984). Interestingly he says that, according to Duby, the ecclesiastical Romanesque is "both an equation and a fugue", and he describes its architect as "a

pure visionary able to compose psalmodic assemblages" (1994: 268). Psalmody is defined by Martin as "a nonmeasured musical time" and as "a brutal and violent war chant" (267). The musical analogy is again the appropriate one.

I include this excursion here because Martin adeptly describes the "dance of the pilgrims" as an ambulatory journey which links together the sanctuaries of the incompossible worlds of the domed basilica and the deep crypt "like so many views of a kaleidoscope agitated according to various speeds and slownesses", and where the dance is a transversal that runs between closed, independent spaces, and which "traces a line of transition from one world to another" (274). He goes on to quote Duby who uses the analogy of the rondo, describing the unveiling of the liturgy to "a slow, majestic rondo" (274). Here again Martin is implicitly commenting on and extending the insights of Deleuze and Guattari in that in the rondo the refrain is repeated between episodes. It is a form that is often used in the last movement of a sonata, a form of composition evoked by Deleuze and Guattari in *What is Philosophy?* to demonstrate the openness created by modulation, and the way that "a plane of composition is born from the joining of musical sections, from the closure of sonorous compounds" (Deleuze and Guattari 1991: 190).[15]

When Martin turns to his discussion of the relic the character of the transversal line as a line of experimentation that brings together heterogeneous elements without reducing them to a unity becomes

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[15] I refer to the sonata as an explosive form of theme and variation in Chapter Three where I discuss how Mondrian's rigid vertical and the horizontal grids open onto the soaring variation of the deframed composition.

clear. Using the image Borges's Chinese bestiary, from Foucault's *The Order of Things* (1966), Martin makes the point that the ambulatory line, or "aleatory series", maintains propositions that are chosen around function rather than category (Martin 1994: 273). The series is quite disparate; in this case the strange eclectic reliquary of fabric, bones, and jewels seen by the hero of Umberto Eco's novel *The Name of the Rose* (1980):

> I saw, wonder of wonders, under a glass bell, on a red cushion embroidered with pearls, a piece of the manger of Bethleham, and a hand's length of the purple tunic of St. John the Evangelist, two links of the chains that bound the ankles of the apostle Peter in Rome, the skull of Saint Adalbert, the sword of Saint Stephen, a tibia of Saint Margaret, a finger of Saint Vitalis, a rib of Saint Sophia ....
> (Martin 1994: 273; Eco 1980: 423)

The relic is not a fragment of a coherent collection or whole, but a wonder. It is a wonder precisely because it does not fit, and cannot be normalised. The collection is a multiplicity that escapes hermeneutic interpretation, ordering and categorisation. However its humour and distinctive function emerges through arrangement and differentiation, when it is put into a series with other such remnants and drawn into, what Martin calls "this heteroclite retinue of relics" (Martin 1994: 273). As Martin suggests, the very obscurity of the relic challenges the notions of support and principle, and the power of identity. Where is the resemblance and similarity between the withered rose and a tibia of St Margaret, between a rib and a sword? The swarm of relics is obscure, but each item is quite distinct. Each wonder is included in the reliquary, but it does not belong in the fragments is chosen around a function—the miracle, the myth and the wonder—and weaving a diagonal between bones, jewels, and scraps of cloth deploys a plane of

consistency that refers to a pragmatic order of visibility.[16] That order has neither beginning nor end, nor centred support, but functions as a complex, heterogeneous organization, a labyrinth or multiplicity.

In the first paragraph of *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* Deleuze talks about the Baroque labyrinth as a "multiple": "The multiple [*le multiple*] is not only what has many parts but also what is folded in many ways" (3 [5]). Here his definition of the "multiple" accords with the Bergsonian understanding of the "multiplicity" as virtual and continuous. It is not reducible to numbers or to discrete parts, or to a set (Deleuze 1966: 38). It also fits with Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of the multiple as a rhizomorphic heterogeneity in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980) (Deleuze and Guattari 1980: 8–9). [17]

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[16] Martin compares Eco's list of relics (the "text") to the statement, defining a statement after Foucault and Deleuze as "a discursive formation cutting through many levels and orders; it is a multiplicity that escapes structural normalization and hermeneutic interpretation" (1994: 273). A statement "refers to an order of visibility, and gives rise to a pragmatics and semantics, for linguistics is not enough to account for it" (274). Eco's list forms a statement because it constructs a state of affairs that is a non-discursive reality. For Deleuze and Guattari's reading see *A Thousand Plateaus* 'Postulates of Linguistics' (1980: 75–85).

[17] Deleuze's theory of virtual multiplicity is disputed by Alain Badiou. See: Badiou 1994 and Badiou 1997. Badiou pits the Leibniz–Deleuze ontology that works with the multiple as a folded and inclusive *point-subset* against his own "set-theory ontology of elements and belonging" (1994: 53). He acknowledges the tension between the "belonging" of the element and the "inclusion" of the part or subset. For Deleuze the smallest unit of matter is not the point "which is never a part" but the fold, which is "a simple extremity of the line" (Deleuze 1993a: 6). For Badiou the element has a value as a discrete unit of matter. While Deleuze recognises the virtual multiplicity of the differential relation, Badiou insists on the actuality of the multiple and

In their introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari characterize this peculiar order as a rhizome, a configuration for which they arrive at the formula "pluralism = monism" declaring that "It is composed not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion" (1980: 20–21). As in Eco's sanctuary of wonders there is no definable and countable inventory with a beginning and a point of completion, but only a middle [*milieu*] from which it grows (21). As in the peregrinations of Martin's pilgrims there is no set itinerary, and each new halt or deviation changes the dynamic and the humour of the journey. The multiplicity remains volatile and mobile.

The multiplicity is defined by Martin, after Deleuze and Guattari, as "a variety from which unity has been removed" and is given the value or dimension (*n–1*) (Martin 1994: 278).[18] As Martin points out, this subtraction is not modelled on a negative ontology; (*n–1*) is a positive formula "that affirms the being of differences" (279). What is subtracted is the invariable principle that supports multiple fragments as a unity and a recognisable identity, the principle that signifies the power of the verb "to be". When that cohesive principle is subtracted the multiplicity preserves all differences inside the dimension (*n–1*), decomposing the conjunctive identity "to be", and privileging the disjunctive and aleatory connections of the vagabond movement. The fragments remain distinct and autonomous, gaseous elements tied up as a swarm or host of relics only by an "unqualifiable distance and a monstrous proximity" (279):

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a "resolute 'set-theory ontology', which *weaves out of the vacuum* the greatest complexities, and *reduces to pure belonging* the most entangled topologies" (Badiou 1994: 53).

> … jewels, enamels, fibulas, and buckles display their piercing light rays as a cloud of luminous stars, a veritable swarm of shiny points turning around themselves, like a volatile whole. … Here, the power of inorganic life begins to beat according to disparate rhythms. It is the power of a life liberated from the constraints of unity, totality, and organic purposiveness—dust of stars and solar singularities. (279)

Sylvester finds similar eclectic series in Klee. Contrasting Klee's method of composition with the constructed forms of Renaissance painting, he finds echoes of Mexican picture-writing, Egyptian hieroglyphics, Sumerian cuneiforms, Chinese ideograms and the Gothic, observing an affinity with German Gothic illumination (1997: 36). *Shattered Labyrinth* 1939 [*Zerstörtes Labyrinth* 1939], a painting from Klee's Bern period, is a case in point. Again the verbal prefix—*zer* indicating disjunction or destruction—resonates in the title of the work suggesting catastrophe, destruction and the complexity of the labyrinth. In Klee too the figure is a composition of disparate fragments working in the dimension (*n–1*). With no defining categorization the figure, whether it be pilgrimage or painting, exists only as it emerges from the tortuous and disjunctive synthesis of the journey of its composition and is characterised only by the textures of that travel. Meandering, halts and deviations; twists and arabesques—a journey into the unknown and the obscurity, and the continuous variation of the event of (*n–1*) dimensions.

Klee creates his work with the same spirit of adventure that Sylvester demands of the viewer, as a journey, a walk and a creative metamorphosis. He is aware of the radicality of this move to

[18] See: Deleuze and Guattari 1980: 6

abstraction:

> In this realm we cross a boundary line of reality. There is no copying or reproducing, but rather transformation and new creation. If we surrender to it, a metamorphosis occurs, something which, if healthy, is always new. (Klee 1956: 460)

This process of form-production [*Gestaltung* and "taking a walk with a line"] begins with the point set in motion, and this is what I now turn to in order to explore how the virtual multiplicity works in the case of Klee's paintings.

### *"all form begins with a point set in motion"*

*The Thinking Eye* opens with a discussion on Cosmos–Chaos and focuses on the problem of creativity as one of bringing order out of chaos. However in keeping with Guattari's notion of chaosmosis as a "machinic heterogeneity", Klee understands 'chaos' as a "cosmogenic moment", a complex and vibratory point fundamental to the creative form-production *Gestaltung* (Guattari 1992: 33–57; Klee 1956: 22). This "cosmogenetic moment" is the starting point of the "line on a walk", a line which has no beginning or end, but which erupts from the middle [*milieu*]. While I read the point as a 'moment' of continuous variation and modulation, in *The Thinking Eye* Klee describes the point as "an infinitely small planar element, an agent carrying out zero motion, i.e. resting" (1956: 105). However he admits that the point has primordial motion; it sets itself in motion and affects the active line and the genesis of form.

Mathematically, this point is a point of inflection. Klee pictures it as the grey point and as chaos. It is a point where all the colours of the spectrum are distinct and yet remain obscure in the 'chaos' of their differential relations and appear as grey. The differential relation is a "distinct and obscure" perception because, for example, yellow and blue remain distinct and yet are obscured in the production of the colour green. (In contrast, the noise of the sea, or hunger, is clear but confused because we do not distinguish its specific elements—the individual waves or the need for sugar or salt.) This Leibnizian identification stands as a direct confrontation to the Cartesian principle of commonsense as thought that is "clear and distinct" and demonstrates the differential relation as a virtual multiplicity.[19]

The grey point, as a point of inflection, functions in *(n–1)* dimensions and, as Martin so clearly argues, that multiplicity is an unreified variation that preserves and "affirms the being of differences" (1994: 279). It is, in Deleuzian terms, deterritorialized. This is consistent with Klee's own statement about "real chaos" in which he states that "The nowhere-existent something or the somewhere-existent nothing is a non-conceptual concept of freedom from opposition" (Klee 1956: 3).[20] Clearly this point is 'chaos' not because it is indistinct (it is not), but because of its strange obscurity as an inexact dimensionality—*(n–1)*.[21]

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19 See: Deleuze 1968a: 213

20 See: Deleuze and Guattari 1991: 99–100 for the additional parallel between deterritorialization in philosophy and Samuel Butler's utopia *Erewhon*, nowhere/now-here. Pictorially *Erewhon* would be 'no-where' figure of the *(n–1)* dimensional point. Like *Gestaltung* it is 'over against form'.

21 See: Daniel Smith's article entitled "Deleuze's Theory of Sensation: Overcoming the Kantian Duality" (1996: 29–56). Smith discusses Deleuze's

As Martin's description of the strange disjunctive synthesis of the reliquary demonstrates, this point of 'chaos' is a dimensionality that preserves difference because it refuses the cohesive structural ontology of "to be". What is important in Klee's understanding of the point as a primordial and cosmogenetic chaos is that it is the same disjunctive non-concept, free from the limitations of an oppositional order, "forever unweighable and unmeasurable" and always *inbetween* (Klee 1956: 3). As the analogy of the grey point demonstrates, it is a heterogeneous complexity or multiplicity that keeps the differential relation in play, and which embraces the "distinct and obscure".

The grey point is a point at once black and white, but neither black nor white. It is a point where all colours are active (fig. 5.11). Klee was very interested in Goethe's theory of colour relations, and his theory of the grey point seems to owe much to Goethe. Klee calls grey the colourless median; a colour created when opposite colour quantities are equal. As his many diagrams of the spectral circle show, the importance of grey is that it is the "total equilibrium" of the whole spectrum (1956: 505). Black and white are polar colours, red and green diametric, and blue and yellow are peripheral (475, 499–511). The median of each pair is grey. Thus the paradox of grey is that it is both colourless and the sum of the colours. Grey is the chaotic indeterminable, and potentially any colour. As such, grey is a differentiating principle.

Like Mondrian whose grids depend on the tension between the

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take up of a post-Kantian tradition that embraces the anti-Cartesian philosophy of Nietzsche and Bergson (and indeed Leibniz) and which embraces the 'distinct and obscure', rather than that of Fichte and Hegel who rely on progress towards a clear and distinct reason.

vertical and the horizontal, Klee works with the idea that through polar equilibrium opposites cancel each other out. The grey point—"utter chaos" or "real chaos"—is grey because it is, as Brian Massumi puts it in *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1992), a "bipolar integration": neither light or dark, black or white, blue or yellow, up or down, hot or cold, neither concave or convex, and crucially neither line not plane—or both (Massumi 1992: 19). But, by being always *between* polarities the grey point is an intense point that carries the movement and distribution of tension between that polarity. Like the rhizome, it does not so much have dimensions as "directions in motion" (Deleuze and Guattari 1980: 21). Grey is not a *gâchis* [waste] or mess of colours but between colours, a non-colour. Klee does not deal in muddied translucent colour; his lines remain clear and crisp, and the colours precise. Grey is *between* colours that are opposite in the spectrum and, as such, achieves the curious status of a heterogeneous multiplicity by being a 'whole' that is at once both all colours and none.

The dimensions of the point of inflection are similarly paradoxical being both between dimensions and non-dimensional. Contemporary physics provides a vocabulary and analysis of such points and of emergent form, as we see by reading Klee alongside *Order out of Chaos* (1979) by Prigogine and Stengers, who were also influenced by Bergson's work on time, dynamic systems, and being and becoming (1979: 90–94). Once Klee's grey point is understood as the mathematical point of inflection, it is possible to develop a theory of the abstract line in terms of a continuous, non-narrative linearity. Such a theory demands that expression be understood as an emergent image drawn in duration out of the point set in motion, and not as a manipulation of space. The point of inflection is by no means empty or static, despite being defined in *Collins English Dictionary* as a mathematical "stationary point". This is clear if the point of inflection is understood as it is mathematically, as the point on the curve at

which the tangent is vertical or horizontal—that is, where the curvature is both concave and convex, or neither. This point is not really a point at all, but the smallest interval between the line and the curve, where the curve is infinitely variable. The interval, where the curve is neither convex nor concave, is a point of inflection, an anticipation where movement can go in any direction. It is an interval intense with potentiality and the openness of chance. In *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari call the smallest interval "diabolical" and a "master of metamorphosis" (1980: 109). They go on to say that in the interval,

> We witness a transformation of substances and a dissolution of forms, a passage to the limit or flight from contours in favor of fluid forces, flows, air, light, and matter, such that a body or a word does not end at a precise point. We witness the incorporeal power of that intense matter, the material power of that language. (109)

With this fluidity in mind, the point of inflection can be imagined as subject to Zeno's paradox of division, where each part has absolute [$\infty$] magnitude and division is an infinite process. It is continuous and infinitely folded. Its precise composition is a 'problem' of distribution because it is not subject to exterior determination but open to choice. Martin reminds us that for Deleuze "a problem constitutes a multiplicity or a distribution of singularities in the vicinity of which curves and diagrams are determined, nonactual and yet real" (Martin 1994: 266). It is not a case of choosing one world over another but of choosing choice (Deleuze 1985: 177). In the case of Klee's painting it is its multi-dimensionality, or rather its ($n$–$1$) dimensionality, that gives it this capacity of openness and freedom of movement.

In *Cinema 2* (1985), Deleuze finds this same character in the flat, disconnected and fragmented images of "cinematographic automatism", in the work of Robert Bresson, Carl Theodor Dreyer, Eric Rohmer, and of Jean Luc Godard (1985: 178). He designates it "a cinema of the spirit" (178). In a key passage, which is as relevant to Klee as it is to Godard, he stresses that 'reading' the visual image is not a question of association but of fissures and differentiation. In respect to two films by Godard—*Ici et ailleurs* [Here and Elsewhere] and *Six fois deux* [Six times Two]—he remarks:

> Film ceases to be 'images in a chain … an uninterrupted chain of images each one the slave of the next', and whose slave we are (*Ici et ailleurs*). It is the method of BETWEEN, 'between two images', which does away with all that cinema of the One. It is a method of AND, 'this and then that', which does away with all the cinema of Being = is. Between two actions, between two affections, between two perceptions, between two visual images, between two sound images, between the sound and the visual: make the indiscernible, that is the frontier, visible (*Six fois deux*). The whole undergoes a mutation, because it had ceased to be the One-Being, in order to become the constitutive 'and' of things, the constitutive between-two of images. (180)

Functioning *between*, the point can be imagined like the dazzling inexact connections in Mondrian's *Compositions* that I saw as grey flickers and as a musical figuration or *fermata*, an image that Klee offers in his own pictorial production with the appropriate title *Drawing with the Fermata* 1918 (5.12). Twittering, hovering, buzzing the vibration is always inbetween. A pregnant pause. Neither one thing nor the other. Neither linear and two dimensional, or planar and three dimensional—and 'nowhere' inbetween—the dimensionality of the work is overtaken

by endless movement.

The most obvious example of the break with the Modernist concern with flatness and the break through to the smooth topological spaces of continuous modulation is the famous *Twittering Machine* 1922 (fig. 5.13). Here the linear and the planar dimensions are never separated but remain confused, in an ironic play of the two-dimensionality of the canvas and the three dimensional illusion of representation that goes beyond simultaneity. Klee talks about the linear-medial being "neither line not plane but some sort of middle thing between the two", but although the lines are in contact they do not intersect at defined points (fig. 5.3) (Klee: 1956: 109. Instead they set up the explosive and vibratory connections of the point set in motion. In the chaotic complexity of this (*n–1*) dimensionality, the picture is reworked every time you look. The eye keeps on roving. Always going on. Twittering on. The inflective point, not so much chaos, as complexity. The canvas is a cacophonous 'noise' out of which the myriad patterns of smooth space will be drawn. The twittering birds emerge out of the out of the event of non-dimensionality, composed in the directions of motion, and produced in the performance of the active and emerging line. The twittering birds are curious linear-medial figures that have no defined contour and no position in space, and none of the certainty of shape and solidity.

While works like *Twittering Machine* 1922 (fig. 5.13) reveal the peculiar dimensionality of abstraction, Klee's own pictorial diagram "all form begins with a point set in motion" does not really capture the (*n–1*) dimensionality of the line emerging from the point (fig. 5.14). Rather than admitting the active line, here Klee collapses the line into the plane, noting that the line becomes passive as a result of the activation of the plane. The resulting form is an identifiable, clear shape—in this case a square. However the dimensionality of the plane

is itself indeterminable, and topologically the square is flat, like the undulating colour blocks in *Ad Parnassum* 1932 (fig. 5.1). More useful is Klee's notion of the point set in motion as a move from earth to cosmos (fig. 5.15).

Whereas Mondrian aimed at the neutralization of opposites through equilibrium and balance, Klee finds freedom from opposition in "eccentric forces" (Klee 1956: 415). He talks about "the cosmic curve moving away from the earth *ad infinitum*", a flight echoed in the Deleuzian "breakthrough", the divergent series, and the fugitive (Klee 1956: 415). It is a break with earthly, grounded punctual form, the parallel limitations of formal space–time, and a centred and perspectival optical function. Klee moves from earth to cosmos, from the static to the continuous variation of the smooth space effected by the point set in motion and the free movement of the "line on a walk". He makes the analogy between the formation of the spiral, and life and death. While the fixed centre is *statis* and death, the spiral is life—escape, breakaway and a line of flight.

The irony of this opening up to the Cosmos is that Klee then adopts what he calls "an earthbound position"—a reminder of Deleuze's own Paris-bound nomadism. However, this earth-bound 'position' (I hesitate to use the word) also defies dimensionality in that it is a position of such close, or microscopic, vision that all perspective is lost. The positional space is pulverised and assumes the smoothness of radical deterritorialization and *close vision–haptic space.*

As Deleuze describes it, here in reference to inflection, infinite variation and Koch's curve, the line either sinks back into the fixed position or is liberated through freer and freer movements as it reaches for the open sky and fluctuation; it "rises skyward or risks falling upon us" (Deleuze 1993a: 17). Koch's curve is a continuous loop with an

infinite length but finite space. It is a fractal and a way of picturing infinity. Koch's curve has precise but irrational dimensions, 1.261859 dimensions—more than one, less than two. It is an example of the way that bipolarity opens onto the infinite, as the Klee's grey point does. By angular transformations through self-similarity the differential between poles produces a complex shape, the snowflake curve. The result is a monstrous shape but one that has a mathematical precision, symmetry, pattern and rhythm. It is an infinite cavernous shape, more than a line, less than a plane, and it has a 'perimeter' or contour which is regular in its irregularity (Gleick 1987: 98–99). In Koch's curve there is a certain pattern to the burgeoning flight of the curve, and the crisp, precise form is certainly not chaotic. It is not, however, predictable. For instance, the angle of fractal transformation is deferred, and therefore unrestricted by the determination of self-similarity. Variation becomes infinite and the interval between poles a site of turbulence. Chance comes into play.

The curve is a world of infinite folds and lines of flight, indicated only by the whirling vortex that dissipates into the complexity of infinite fluctuation. This is the fractal spiral formation of Klee's cosmic curve. Like particles in a column of cigarette smoke, the line reaches a degree of freedom so complex that it can be described as turbulent or as a 'noise' of gaseous particles.[22] Here there is a variable movement where inflection becomes the transversal line of turbulence as the inflective unfolding of the spiral becomes vortical and the systematic fractal mode of the Koch's curve opens onto fluctuation. Incidentally, the vortex—that whirling mass of the spiral— has a second dictionary

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[22] The analogy of the cigarette smoke is Gleick's. In *Chaos* he likens the random movement of turbulence to smoke. "A plume of cigarette smoke rises smoothly from an ashtray, accelerating until it passes a critical velocity and splinters into wild eddies" (1987: 122).

meaning; it also refers to a "situation, or way of life regarded as irresistibly engulfing" (*Collins English Dictionary*). It seems that the whirlwind, like the ocean, has no orientation but is endlessly engaging. The abstract line spirals and twists cutting across and blocking the formation of the plane, and opening onto the joyous complexity of the fractal. Here chaos becomes rhythmic and gestural, and the figure arises out of the multiple fold of the point as a material trait of expression—whirling, swirling and daring in its hyper-dimensional modulations, it is truly a contrapunctual music of the spheres.

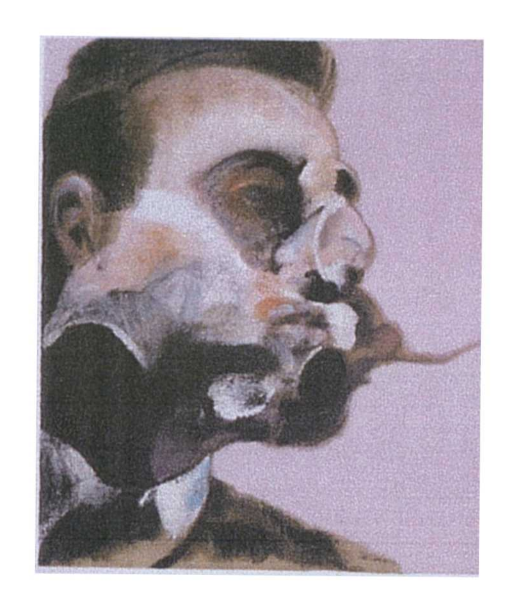
# CHAPTER 6

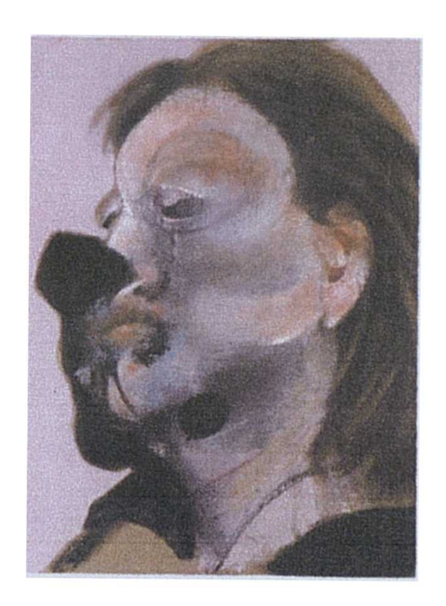
## FRANCIS BACON

The Eloquence of Paint

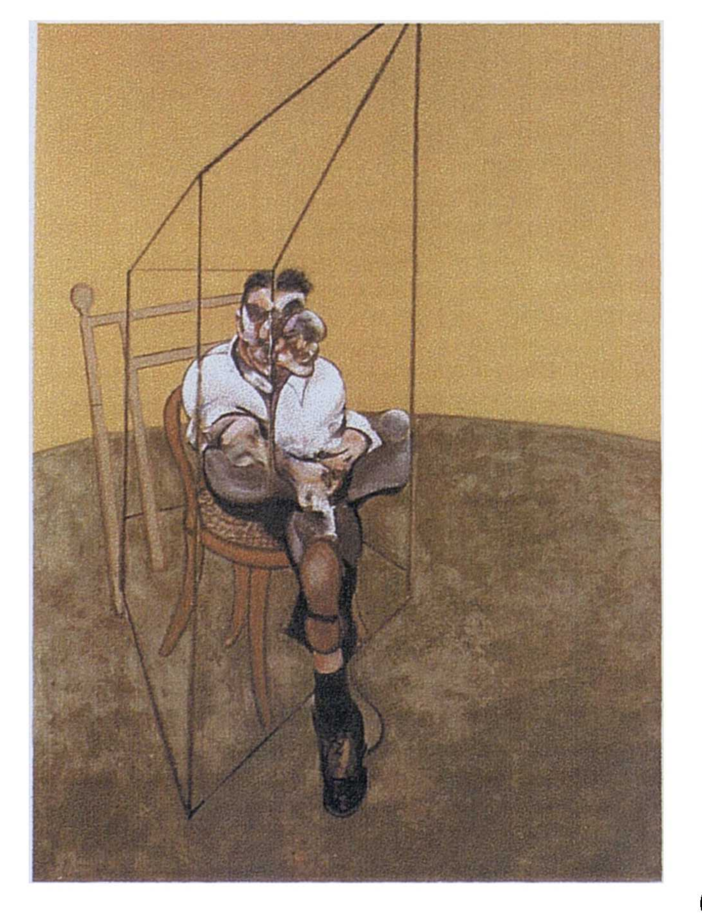


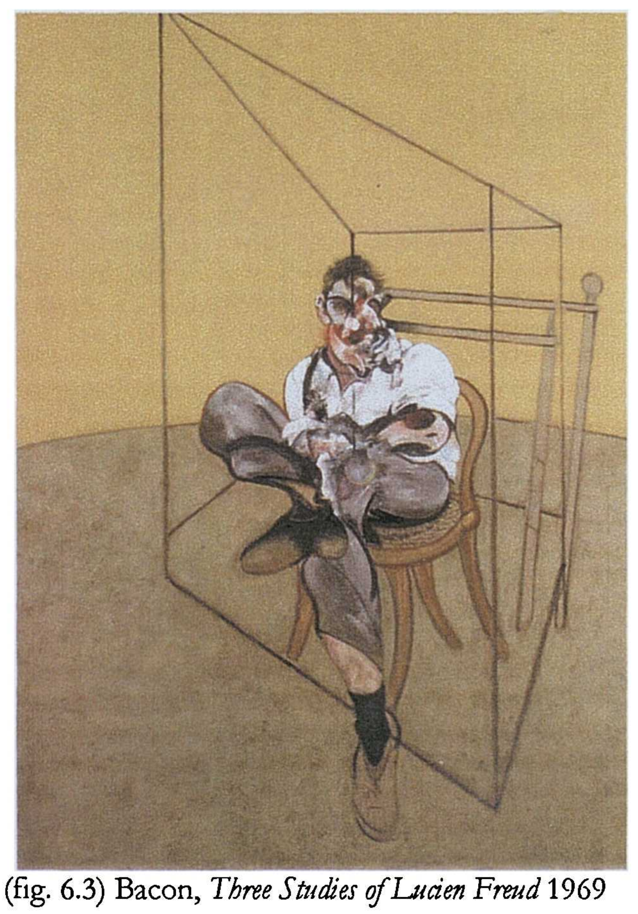
(fig. 6.1) Bacon, *Painting* 1946





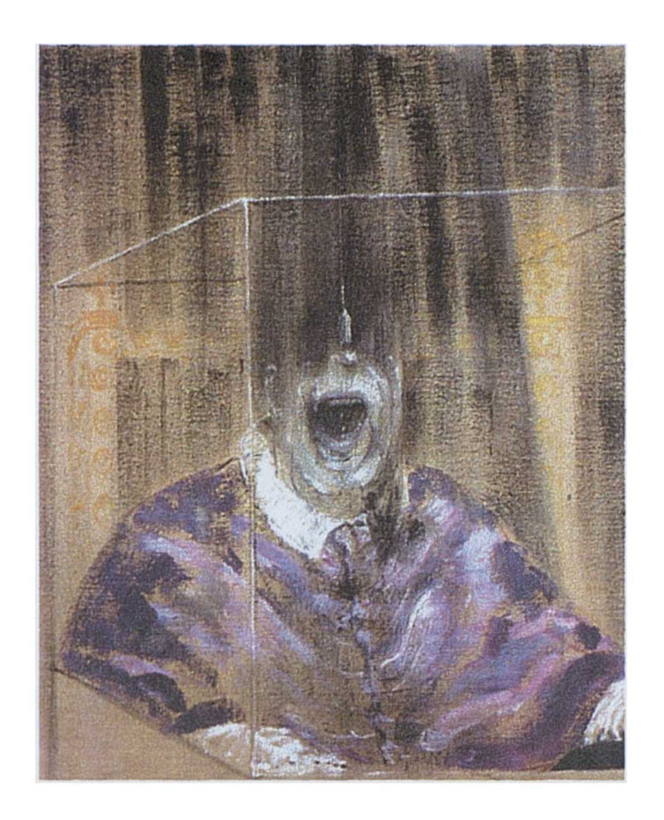
(fig. 6.2) Bacon, *Studies of George Dyer and Isabel Rawsthorne* 1970







(fig. 6.3) Bacon, *Three Studies of Lucien Freud* 1969



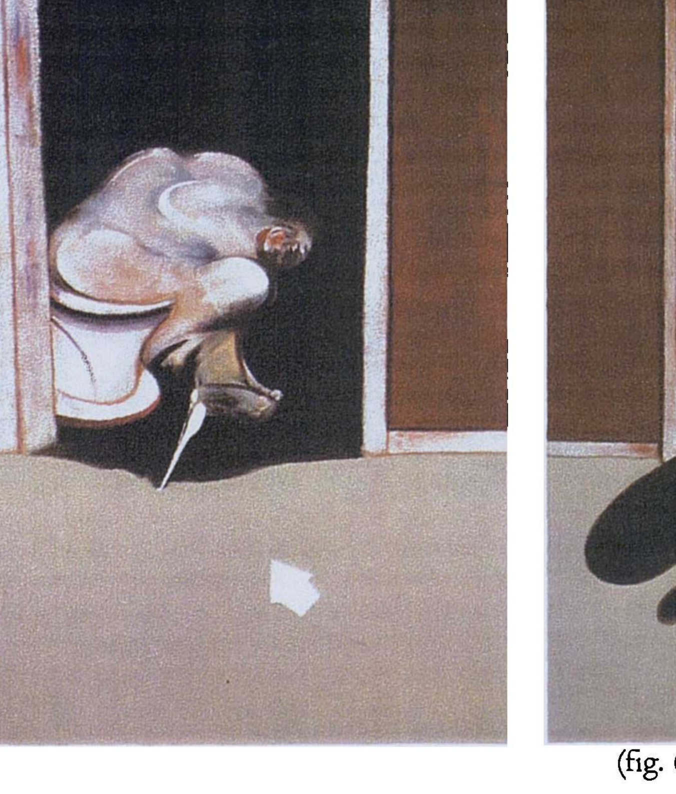
(fig. 6.4) Bacon, *Head VI* 1949

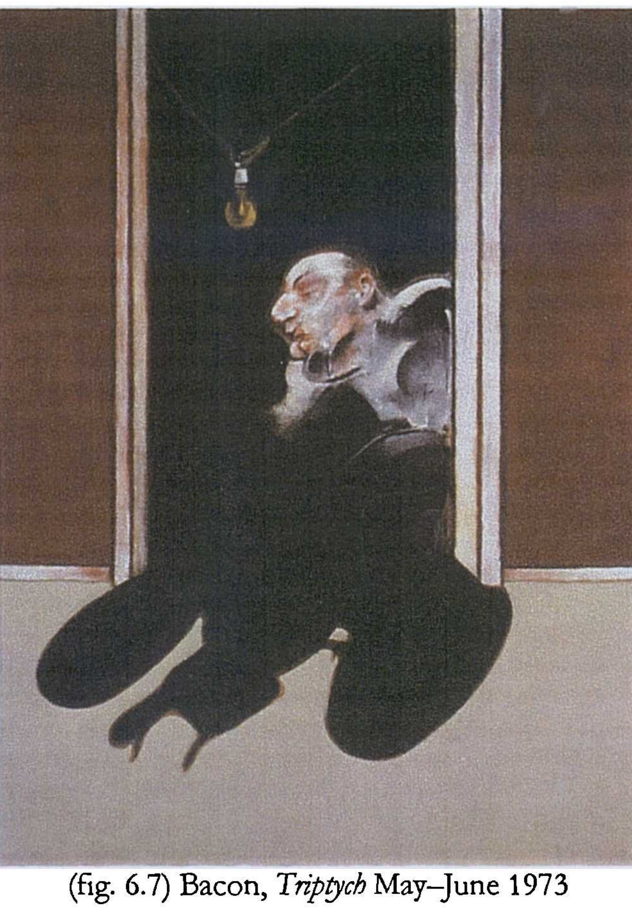


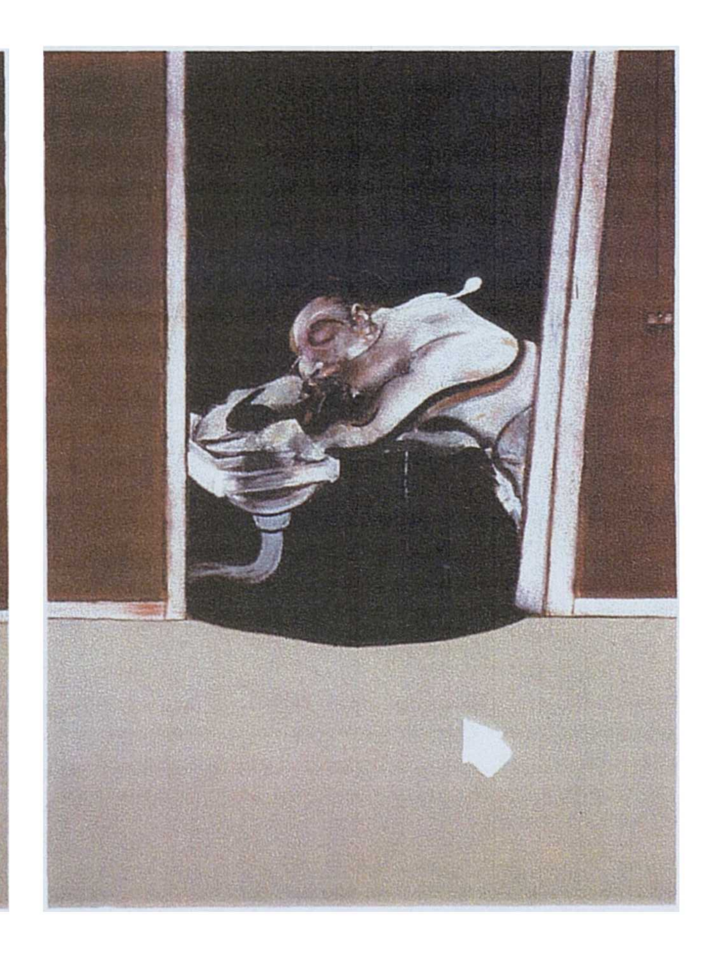
(fig. 6.5) Bacon, *Study after Velásquez's Portrait of Pope X* 1959



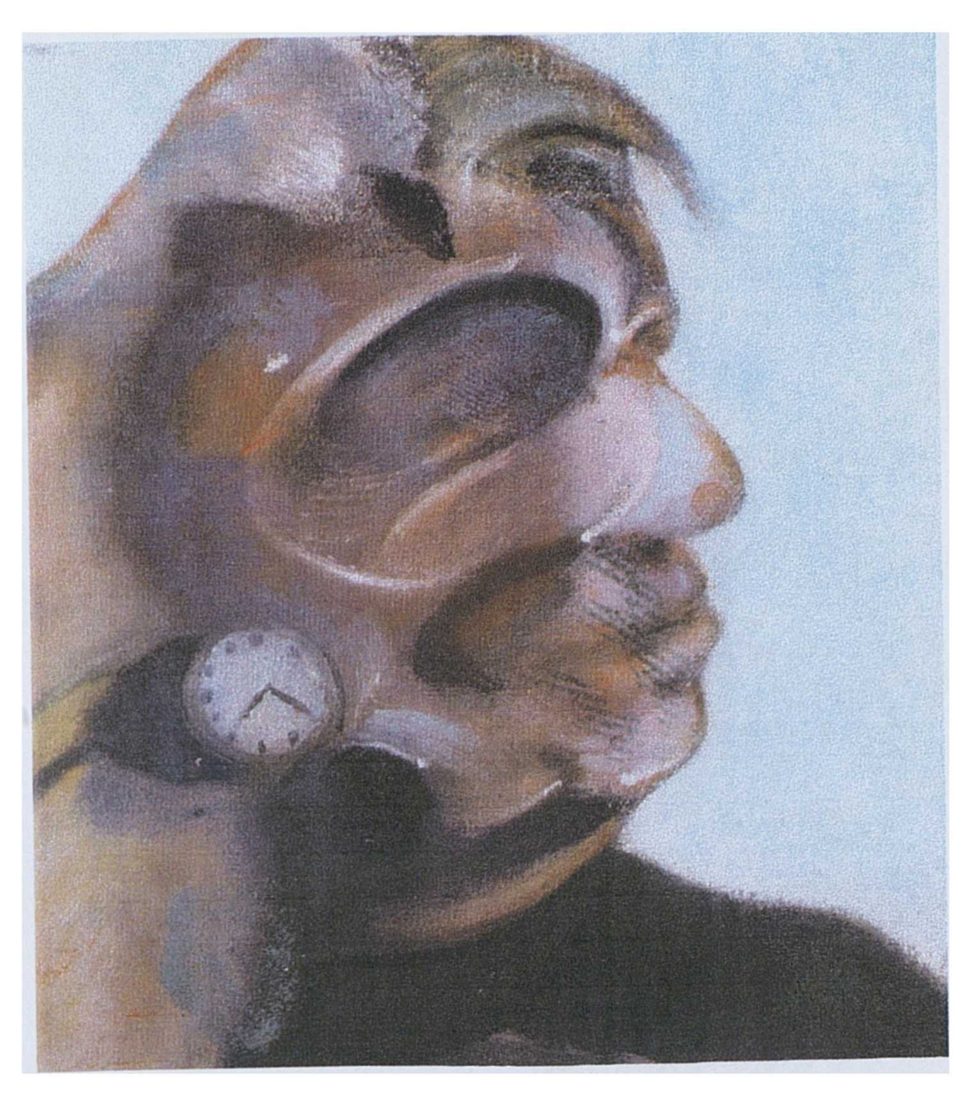
(fig. 6.6) Bacon, *Jet of Water* 1979



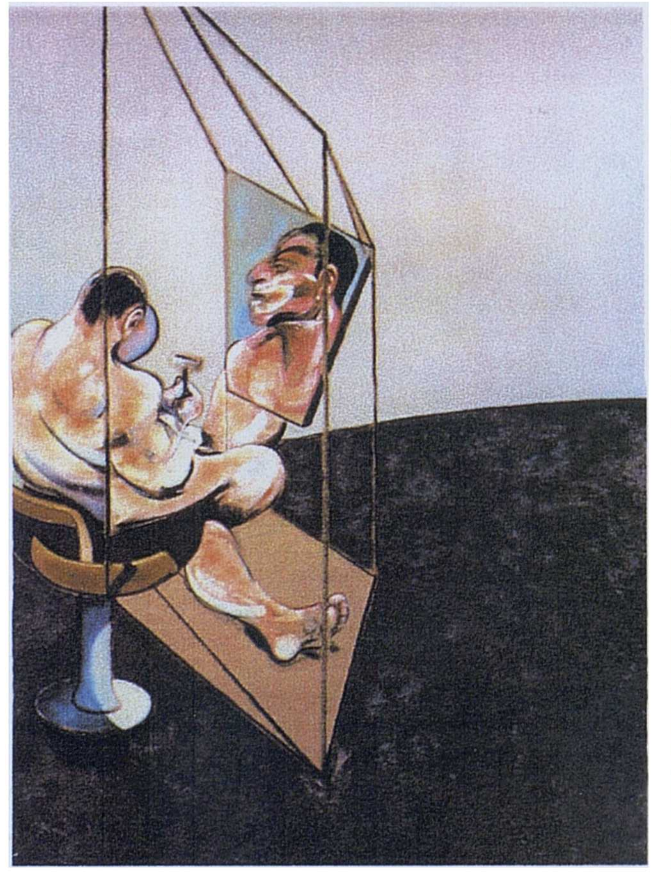


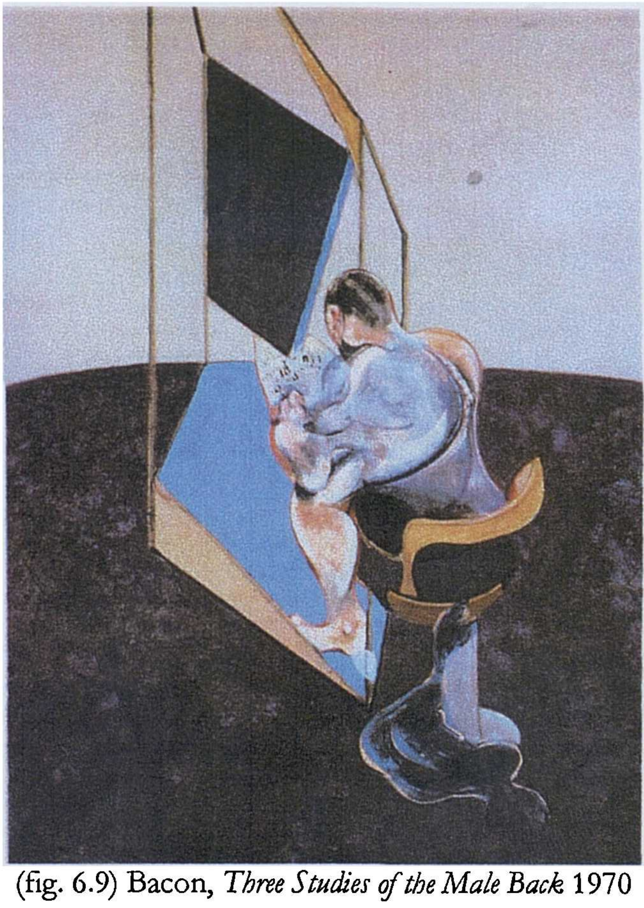


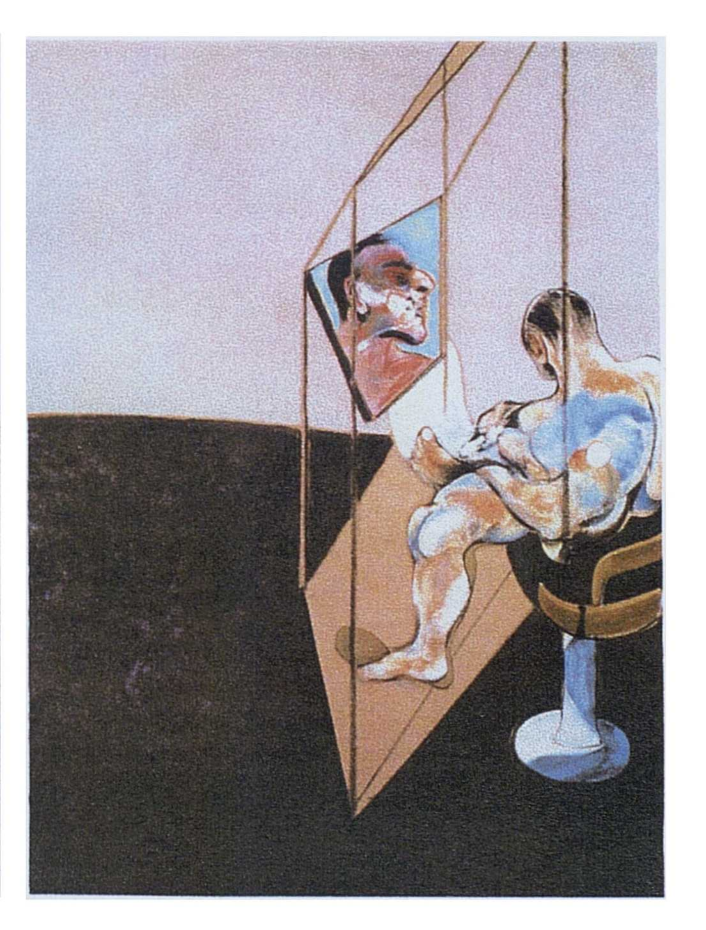
(fig. 6.7) Bacon, *Triptych* May–June 1973



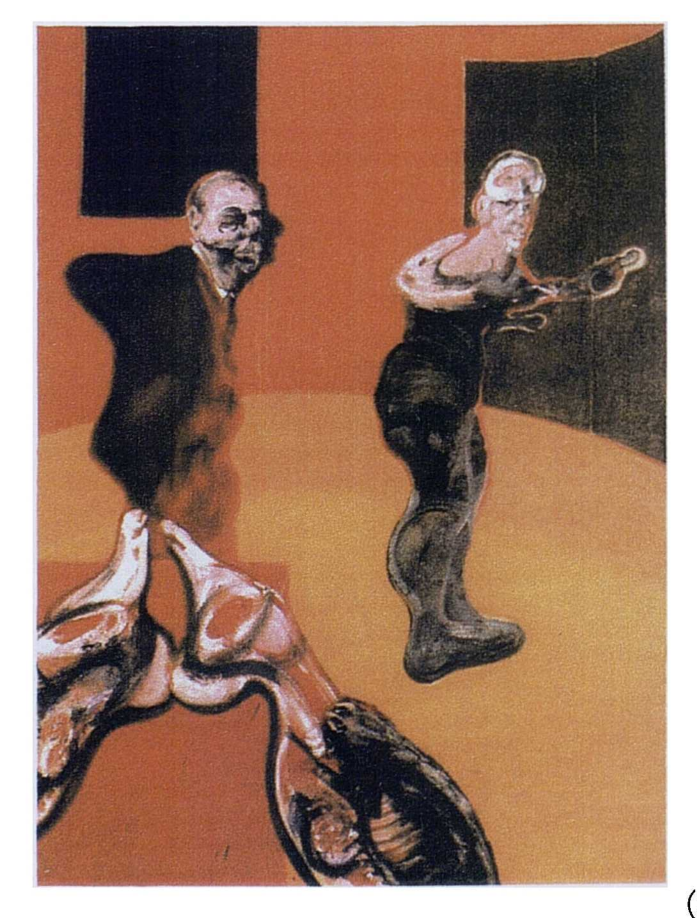
(fig. 6.8) Bacon, *Study for a Self-Portrait* 1973

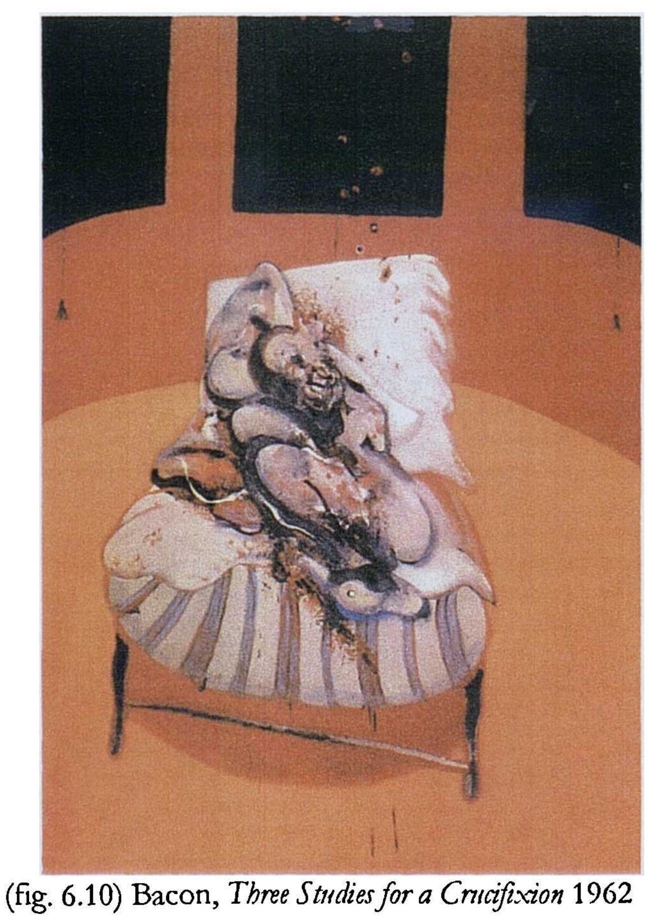


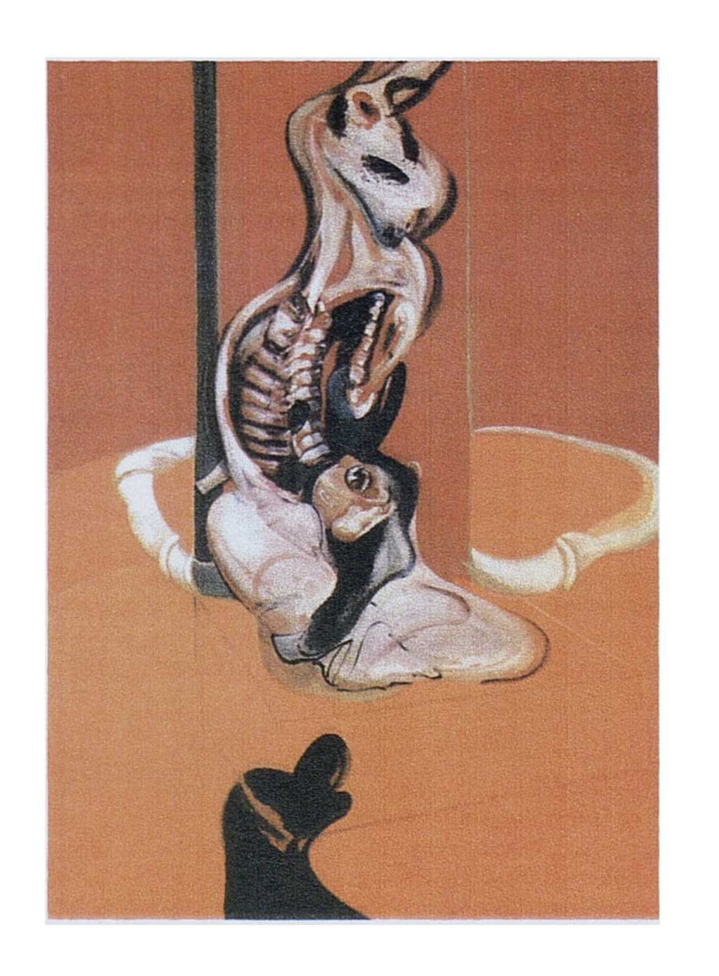




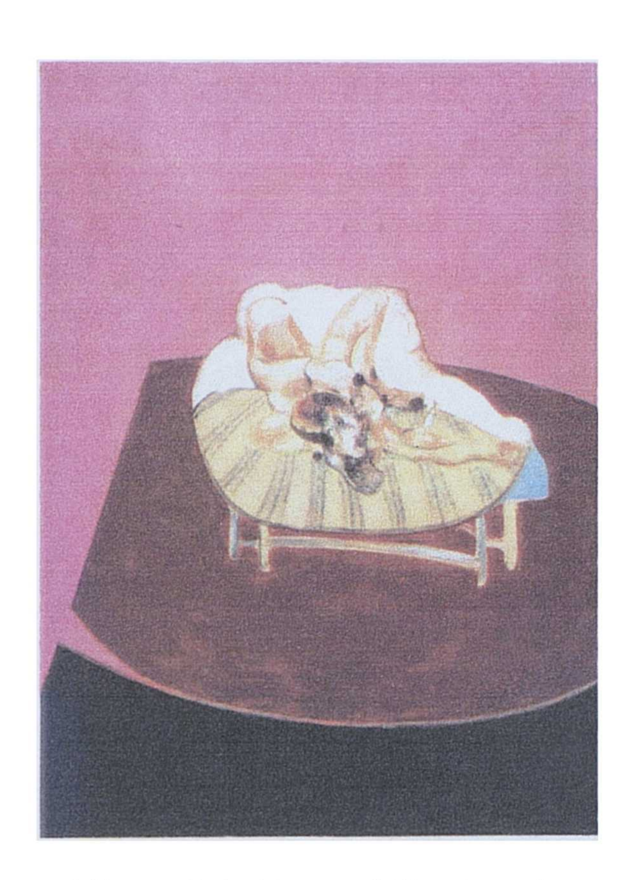
(fig. 6.9) Bacon, *Three Studies of the Male Back* 1970



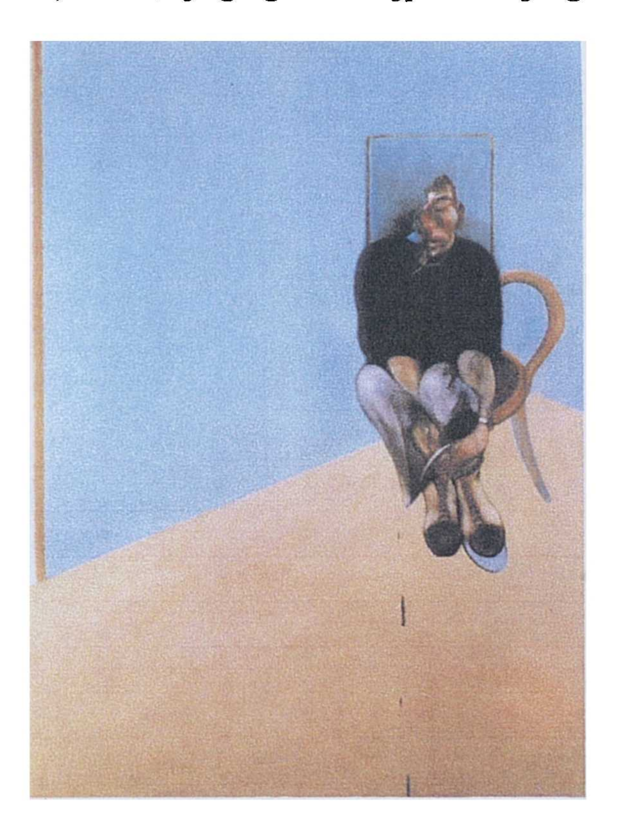




(fig. 6.10) Bacon, *Three Studies for a Crucifixion* 1962



(fig. 6.11) Bacon, *Lying Figure with Hypodermic Syringe* 1963



(fig. 6.12) Bacon, *Study for a Self-Portrait* 1982

*The meanings, all of them, lie in the paint, and they are in the paint not latently but in the impact of the paint upon our senses, on our nerves. Nothing in these paintings is more eloquent than the paint itself.*

David Sylvester, *Francis Bacon: The Human Body* (1998: 25)

## The Portrait: Face and Head

With an uncanny resemblance, but grossly distorted, Francis Bacon's portraits of his friends—George Dyer, David Sylvester, Michel Leiris, Isabel Rawsthorne—are shocking images, portraits where the representational likeness is distorted and dissolved in a violent deformation of the face, and where recognisable appearance is resisted. Resisted, blocked and overtaken by the matter and marks of paint, and by the patterns of composition—by the texture of ribbed overprinting and the sweeping stroke of green or blue, by the unexpected extension if a contour, and by the rhythm of colour and line. Wierd heads arise out of the multiplicity of the diagram, drawn out of the chaosmosis of the wild throw of paint. More animal than human.

Of course the portrait is a face. Or is it a head? In *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), in the chapter entitled, 'Year Zero: Faciality', Deleuze and Guattari identify two poles of faciality, the disciplined, socially produced face, and the fleshy non-signifying head (1980: 167–91). For the face recognition is key, but for the head it is the peculiar *ressemblance sensible* that in *Francis Bacon: Logique de la sensation* (1981a) Deleuze explains as a raw product arising against the lifelike form of the traditional portrait: "the likeness arises then like the raw product by means of non-similarity" [*la ressemblance surgit alors comme le produit brutal de moyens non ressemblants*] (1981a: 75). This is the strange resemblance

that is identified by Deleuze and Guattari in *What is Philosophy?* (1991) as the resemblance that haunts the work of art and which is the affect of the material itself—"the smile of oil, the gesture of fired clay …" (1991: 166). With this in mind, in this last chapter of the thesis I explore how the affect is produced in Bacon's work as the scream of paint, and how that nonhuman affect is expressed in the face, thus opening up the face to new sensations.

In *Difference and Repetition* (1968a) Deleuze had equated resemblance with the logic of representational equivalence, and opposed resemblance to repetition: "Repetition and resemblance [*ressemblance*] are different in kind—extremely so" (Deleuze 1968a: 1). The French adjective *ressemblants* means lifelike or true to life, and is used as an evaluation of the truth of the portrait. Deleuze wants to break with the lived, lifelike perception and move beyond the human. Bergson makes the opening move here in the distinction that he makes between the resemblance that is a mechanical "similarity or repetition", and which is governed by a geometry of the same where like produces like, and the repetition of creative evolution produced in duration, which is possible "only in the abstract" (1911: 45–46). It is this latter repetition or resemblance that Deleuze, writing in *Francis Bacon: Logique de la sensation* finds in the particular resemblance at work in the work of art—the "*ressemblance sensible*" that arises in the composition of colours, lines … (1991: 166; 1981a: 75).

Emerging in duration, out of the matter of composition, the centred and human resemblance of the lived and lifelike face are impossible. Instead a non-codified and non-signifying "*ressemblance sensible*" is made "by means beyond representation/likeness" [*par de moyens non ressemblants*]:

> sensible resemblance is produced, but instead of being symbolically, that is by the detour of code, it is «sensuousness», by way of sensation [*la ressemblance sensible est produite, mais, au lieu de l'être symboliquement, c'est-à-dire par le détour du code, elle est «sensuellement», par la sensation*] (1981a: 75).

I shall argue that the "means beyond representation/likeness" employed by Bacon are a practice of deformation that brings about "the ruin of representation", a break with representation that Dorothea Olkowski in her book *Gilles Deleuze and the Ruin of Representation*, understands as the intrinsic goal of artists and nomads (1999). Instead of creative forces being subordinated to objectified representation and mindful cognition, we find the pragmatism of 'painting without image' and the shock of sensation that impacts on the nervous system.

Deleuze and Guattari again echo Bergson in their work on faciality, in *A Thousand Plateaus* in which the mechanism of representation is opposed to the abstraction of creativity, and the face opposed to the head. The socially produced face is instantly recognizable—ears, eyes, nose, mouth; happy or sad, old or young, man or woman; student, worker, judge ... (1980: 117). This is a complete face with an outline and features, a face that conforms to the order of representation—contour, convergence and completion. It is a finely crafted, disciplined organization, produced within a rationalized social and theoretical milieu, the discourse of white male and European, and as Deleuze and Guattari detail, of Christ as Year Zero. The portrait is an identified likeness; where there is no name and no semblance there is no portrait. The conventions of this signifying faciality require that portraiture deal

in the familiar and rather comfortable form of recognizable likeness, and that likeness carry intimations of character.[1]

The head—the fleshy non-signifying head—is quite different to the readable face of the regal portrait or the obvious signification of the symbol. For Deleuze and Guattari the head is a "horror story" (1980: 181). It is fleshy and animal, a featureless and ill-defined close-up: it is fleshy surface, with "pores, planes, matts, bright colours, whiteness, and holes …" (181). Like Pollock's "all-over" canvases it is a catastrophic landscape—or meat (181). It is a head with no distinct outline or definite features, and no face. The face has perspective, it is generalized and human, meaningful as a realistic and faceified [*visagéifée*] representation. The face as envisaged. The head, on the other hand, is a close-up and arises, or emerges, within the material configuration of the work; it is particular, even nonhuman.

A model of the portrait as an emergent figure is already hinted at in the root of the Latin word 'to portray' *pro-trahere*, to drag forth, a word brought into English via the fourteenth century French *protraire*, and translated as 'to depict', which in turn comes from the Latin *de-pingere*, out of paint. Depiction is a 'top-down' Enlightenment model that sees the portrait brought to light, a figure formed out of base matter. However, the prefix *de-*, with its connotations of distancing and removal (from, away from, out of), and which is retained in the modern French *dépeindre*, to depict and to portray, is a reversal of the positive meaning inferred by the prefix *pro-* (in favour of) of the Latin *pro-trahere*, and maintained in the English 'to portray', and in the French

[1] In his book *Portraiture* Richard Brilliant offers a more complicated definition of the portrait; he rethinks the portrait as a simulacrum of reality and a symbol of a named individual. He cites Picabia's machine part images and Duchamp's *$2000 reward* as examples. See: Brilliant 1991.

noun *portrait.* The distinction is important in my argument for the portrait as an emergent image.

In *Cinema 1* (1983) Deleuze returns to the notion of faciality and again talks about the two poles of the face, the outlined, featured face of facefication [*visagéification*], and the micro-movements which indicate expression and that he calls the traits of faceity [*visagéité*]. Deleuze goes to great pains to stress that these poles are not exclusive and that the face involves different mixtures of faceification and faceicity, the important point being that the face is not a surface on which expression is inscribed, but that the face is itself a close-up and an affect:

> As for the face itself, we will not say that the close-up deals with [*traite*] it or subjects it to some kind of treatment: there is no close-up *of* the face, the face itself is close-up, the close-up is by itself face and both are affect, affection-image. (1993: 88)[2]

It is in the face as close-up that we find a pure being of sensation. This is the affect that is no longer feeling or opinion but that exists in itself in the smile of oil or the scream of paint, and it is this abstraction that Deleuze and Guattari identify in the work of art when in *What is Philosphy?* they state that "artists are presenters of affects, the inventors and creators of affects" (1991: 175). In the previous chapter, on Klee, we saw how pure sensation arises from the vibratory, non-conceptual concept of the 'grey' point and how, by means of the material, art works to "render visible" and to preserve the Event of that "colouring

[2] See: Chapter Three on Pollock where I discuss the face–landscape as a distributive *white wall/black hole system* and as an abstract machine.

sensation". The question remains as to how philosophy might become equal to the Event of the work of art, and how we might conceptualize the eloquence of paint and the strange and shocking intensity of the percept or the affect that stands on its own.

## *C. S. Peirce and Matter in Movement*

Deleuze's definition of the affect, or affection-image, comes out of his reading of the work of C. S. Peirce. So, before moving on to examine the production of the affect in Bacon's work, I shall first put Deleuze's work on the face as close-up and affect in context.

Deleuze calls Peirce the "founder of semiology", a pioneer whose strength was "to conceive of signs on the basis of images and their combinations, not as a function of determinants which were already linguistic (1983: 69; 1985: 30). The Peircian theory of signs is then not to be understood as a theory of reason, signification or mediation within a linguistic model, but as touching on the direct and the pragmatic work of images.

I regard Peirce's Pragmatism as a philosophy of interpretation after Nietzsche for whom interpretation is philosophy's highest art because it is an affirmative practice and "the active expression of an active mode of existence" (Deleuze 1982: 2–4). Peirce defines pragmatism as a *positive science*, a category that also includes mathematics and the study of behaviour—idioscopy—as well as philosophy, which he defines as a science of experience (Peirce 1940: 61). It is anti-illustrational, pro-experiential, experimental and provisional (261). This makes pragmatism a particularly maverick phenomenology, even a metaphysics despite Peirce's disclaimer, because it deals with reality

and "meaning" as a disposition and not as truth (271, 314 and Chapter 22). Note *dis*position, already here is an opening onto an expressionist aesthetic because there is no idealization in Peirce's "meaning". Peirce distances himself from the metaphysical concern with truth and being—"Suffice to say once more that pragmatism is, in itself, no doctrine of metaphysics, no attempt to determine any truth of things. It is merely a method of ascertaining the meanings of hard words and of abstract concepts"—but I suggest that his work points to the metaphysics of becoming taken up by Deleuze (Peirce 1940: 271).

In conversation with Pascal Bonitzer and Jean Narboni 'On *The Movement-Image*' reprinted in *Negotiations*, Deleuze discusses the significance of Peirce's classification of images and signs, and explains that

> in each case there are internal signs that characterize these images, from both genetic and compositional viewpoints. They are not linguistic signs, even when they are aural or even vocal. The significance of Peirce is to have worked out an extremely rich classification of signs, relatively independently of the linguistic model. (1990: 46)[3]

Peirce starts, not with the model, appearance or the figure; but "with the image, the phenemenon or from what appears" and tries to maintain semiotics as a 'descriptive science of reality', and to resist the subordination of semiotics to a representational system (Deleuze 1985: 30). However, in *Cinema 2*, Deleuze concludes that Peirce is wrong to

[3] See: Deleuze 1990: 46–56. This conversation first appeared in *Cahiers du Cinéma* 352 (October 1983). For further discussion of the movement-image see, Deleuze 1985: 30–34.

claim his logic of signs as a fact of appearance. Because Peirce's semiology is a classification of signs on the basis of images, their combinations and their power, quality, and action, Deleuze argues that the type of image must be deduced from the point of view of its composition and genesis (1985: 31). This turn from 'lived experience' to the work of the image—its composition and genesis—makes the sign a question of matter which expresses movement (the movement-image) and the emergence of sensation as a set of actions and reactions (the perception-image) rather than of signification. Deleuze and Guattari therefore transpose Peirce's classification of signs to the question of territorialization–deterritorialization (Deleuze and Guattari 1980: 531 note 41). This means that types of image are deduced from the expression of the material configuration.

This move depends on Bergson's work on images, matter and movement in *Matter and Memory* (Chapter 1) (1896: 17–76). Bergson's first thesis of movement is the idea that, the image = movement.[4] If, as Bergson contends, every image (where the image is "the set of what appears") is indistinguishable from the material and its actions and reactions, then the image is a modulation where there is no privileged perspective or Zero point. It is acentred. The set of all images, Deleuze concludes, constitutes a plane of immanence (or plane of composition) on which the image exists 'in-itself' as the absolute identity of image and movement. This 'in-itself' of the image is matter [*matière*] and that matter is a "signaletic material" [*signalétique*] (Deleuze 1985: 33). Understanding the image as matter, Deleuze then reads Peirce's conception of the sign as indicative of the image and its combinations,

[4] Deleuze recognises three theses of movement in Bergson. See: Deleuze 1983: 1-11.

and the sign then refers to the expression produced by matter in movement [*la matière en mouvement*] (33).

For Deleuze, as for Bergson, the movement-image and matter are identical because the self-existing image is the movement of matter:

> This in-itself of the image is matter: not something hidden behind the image, but on the contrary the absolute identity of the image and movement. The identity of the image and movement leads us to conclude immediately that the movement-image and matter are identical. (Deleuze 1983: 58–9)[5]

Deleuze distinguishes the automatic or autogenetic movement as the immediate given of the image, and the image as one that escapes the hylomorphic form of modern figuration and abstraction:

> This kind of movement no longer depends on the moving body or the object which realizes it, nor on the spirit which reconstitutes it. It is the image that moves in itself. In this sense it is neither figurative nor abstract. (1985: 156)

With the equation of the image and movement in mind, Deleuze borrows and adapts Peirce's classification of signs in his own delineation of cinematographic concepts, but Peirce's pragmatic semiotics is at least as useful when applied to painting, a parallel which Deleuze himself acknowledges when in his preface to the English edition of *Cinema 2*, he explains his own reading of the cinematographic image:

[5] See: Bergson 1896: 10

> It is not quite right to say that the cinematographic image is in the present. What is in the present is what the image 'represents', but not the image itself, which, in cinema as *in painting*, is never to be confused with what it represents. The image itself is the system of the relationships between its elements, that is a set of relationships of time from which the variable present only flows. (my italics) (1985: xii)

In his written response to a serious of questions about the cinematographic image 'Doubts about the Imaginary' (1986), Deleuze talks about the cinema "trying to construct an image of thought" (1990: 62–67). But instead of constructing a dogmatic image of thought which projects the imitative common sense view of reality—recognizable, truthful and independent—cinema creates the self-moving image or movement-image. It signs. Of course, cinema produces signs specific to it peculiar techniques, but these signs are not exclusive: "Once it produces them they turn up elsewhere", and the world starts "turning cinematic" [*faire du cinéma*]; it adopts cinematic models and it works like a film (65, 193). It is this self-movement that I see in Bacon's 'cinematic' painting.

Because the cinematographic image is characterized by its material structure—the montage—and not by its representational or narrative form, Deleuze understands cinematographic images as signs, and "Signs are images seen from the viewpoint of their composition and genesis" (1990: 65). So, while cinema and painting have their own aesthetic techniques, they have an affinity as works of art that stand on their own, and which in their self-movement "render visible" the "difference in itself" of the virtual.

While in *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari go on to explore how the infinite movement of the virtual multiplicity is preserved in the work of art, in *Cinema 2* (1985), Deleuze finds the same automatic movement in the cinematographic image. He makes a case for analysing paintings as if they were cinematographic images, something that seems particularly apt for Bacon's images where the figure arises out of the "malleable mass" [*une masse plastique*] of colour, a mass described as "a descriptive material loaded with visual and sound features of expression, synchronized or not, zig-zags of forms, elements of action, gestures and profiles, syntactic sequences" (1985: 156 [207], 159). This mass functions like the montage where the image and its expression is a system of relations.

As we shall see later in this chapter, with respect to Deleuze's discussion of montage and the film-maker Sergei Eisenstein, Deleuze maintains that the distinction between painting and the cinema is that, while the painting is immobile and dependent on the mind, and has to 'make' movement, in the cinema the image 'itself' makes movement (1985: 156). However as I have argued throughout this thesis, the distinction of the Modernism of Mondrian, Pollock, Klee, and the subject of this chapter Bacon, is the abstraction that works against the referential image, and that this work functions instead as the self-moving image. In paintings like those of Klee and Bacon the image or Figure emerges in a way not dissimilar to the cinematographic image; it emerges from the inflective movement if the line and the intersection of colour. Like the automatic cinematographic image, here painting moves in itself.[6]

[6] Deleuze notes that Eisenstein analyses the paintings of Da Vinci and El Greco as if they were cinematographic self-moving images (1985: 156). I come back to this point later in the chapter.

### *The Face and the Affection-Image*

Peirce distinguishes three modes of being, three kinds of images that are all avatars of matter in movement (the movement-image), and which are deduced from the various aspects of the reactions and actions of the material (the perception-image).[7] They are the affection-image, the action-image and the mental or relation-image (Peirce 1940: 77–93).[8]

The affection-image (in Deleuze "the affect") carries quality or power and corresponds to what Peirce calls "Firstness". It refers to qualities like red, bitter and hard, and expressions like terror or compassion, and is 'unmaterialized' because it fills the interval between action and reaction, and is thus an expressed (1940: 80–87). The action-image is concerned with change and with forces that are related to one another as in action–reaction, exertion–resistance or excitation–response. Pierce associates the action-image with "Secondness" which is the "actual fact" carried the tension and charge of the existential relation, and which has a brutal force (87–91). The third image, corresponding to "Thirdness", is the relation-image where one thing is related and compared to another. It refers to the "general fact" or law about phenomena that is extrapolated by the mind (91–93).

The artist—painter or cinematographer—is, as we have seen, concerned with the affect or affection-image and how to "render

[7] As the set of actions and reactions the perception-image extends into the other types of image, but all are avatars of the movement-image (matter). See: Deleuze 1985: 30–33.

[8] Deleuze develops Peirce's classification, and extends it to six types of image. See: Deleuze 1985: 32.

visible" the force of red or bitter, terror or compassion. I am, therefore, concerned here only with the affection-image. In the work of Cézanne, for example, I described how the "colouring sensation" produced in the diagram of colour planes was an affect that expressed the smile of Joachim Gasquet, and how the thermal force of the landscape was created in the hesitant intersection of water-colour. In Bacon, I see the force of the scream.

In Bacon's portraits there is the same attempt to paint the power of affect. It is not the shape of a chin, or the proportions of the face, or even the quirky turn of the mouth that indicate likeness. There is not that certainty of perspective that allows for recognition, and yet there is a resemblance made in colour. Red cuts into blue, the white streak dissolves into green, pink smudges into yellow: contours arise within the composition and the material becomes expressive; the white brushstroke forms the brow, the red overprint indicates the mouth, but like the confrontational optical images ('opsigns') that Deleuze identifies in the cinema of Godard or Ozu it is the "colouring sensation" [*sensation colorante*] not the colour of the represented which counts. As Godard says, "It isn't blood, it's some red" (1985: 22). There is no human or linguistic signification; it is the force of colour that impacts. Any resemblance is certainly not a reassuring human likenesses [*ressemblants*] but a horror that disturbs and shocks human sensibility. It is an affect that refers only to the material of the work. It is that affect that is expressed by, and celebrated in the face. The face emerges: a portrait not of outlines and features but of colour and its power of colouring.

In an important passage in *Cinema 1* (1983), Deleuze gives the face or close-up as an example of the pure affect:

> It is the face—or the equivalent—which gathers and expresses the affect as a complex entity, and secures the virtual conjunctions between the singular points of this entity (the brightness, the blade, the terror, the compassionate look ...). (1983: 103)

Here the face is seen as a configuration that gathers the affect as a "complex entity" or "the expressed"; it is an entity that gives consistency to the infinite movement of its own "virtual conjunctions" and expresses the affect produced in that multiplicity (103). Real without being actual, it is this "complex entity" that Deleuze and Guattari call the Event [*Événement*] in *What is Philosophy?* (1991) (Deleuze and Guattari 1991: 156 [147]).

As Deleuze already explains in *Cinema 1* affects are "power-qualities" (1983: 102). They can be actualized in a particular state of things, as objects with particular characters in a particular space-time (and thus be brought into the zone of human action), or they can function outside spatio-temporal coordinates and work with their own "virtual conjunctions" and maintain their status as pure affect in the "complex entity" (1983: 103).

As pure affect, the affection-image is defined by Deleuze as "that which occupies the gap between action and reaction" (Deleuze 1983: Glossary). In other words, it keeps hold of the autogenetic movement that makes matter signaletic material. The affect is the expressed produced in the tremor between colour planes or in the vibration of the point of inflection, and which fills the interval of movement. It exists in any-space-whatever [*espace quelconque*] and is not generalized or thought of as an isolated thing (Deleuze 1983: 65, 111). Instead of an excitation being received, differentiated and reflected in a new movement or action, and perceived as a thing, it surges up and by

occupying the gap between action and reaction eludes actualization by keeping hold of the infinite movement to which it gives consistency. As Deleuze says, "Movement ceases to be that of translation in order to become movement of expression" (1983: 66). We see that movement in the face that expresses the pure affect in the gasp of terror, the howl of the scream, or the quiver of the smile. It is not surprising, says Deleuze, that it is in the face we rediscover the acentred image "in its primary régime of variation"—self-movement (66).

In Bacon's portraits that variation is seen in the fragmentary disjunction of the colour and in features that never converge. Here the curl of Muriel Belcher's ear; there the line of Henrietta Moraes' cheek-bone, a gesture towards a nose, the mouth a streak. In each portrait the elements are there, and in a sense so is the 'unity' of the face, but the organization is dismantled, and the thing distorted far beyond appearance. Here the face is made up of elements but always in permanent upheaval, not unlike the catastrophe of Pollock's "all-over" paintings. In *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze likens such a fragmentary multiplicity to the originary world of philosopher and scientist Empedocles (c.490–430BC) who thought that the world was composed of four elements—air, fire, water and earth—and that these elements were governed by the opposing forces of love and discord, and in permanent upheaval.[9] In *Cinema 1* Deleuze goes on to distinguish the

[9] In the introduction to *Difference and Repetition* (1968a) Deleuze again mentions Empedocles, here claiming that Nietzsche's Zarathustra dramatizes Empedocles. His point is that in *Zarathustra* ideas are dramatized rather than concepts represented: "*Zarathustra* is conceived entirely within philosophy, but also entirely for the stage. Everything in it is scored and visualised, put in motion and made to walk or dance" (1968a: 9).

image in upheaval as a refinement of the affection-image, which he calls the impulse-image, but before examining that move I want to look at Bacon's work in the light of my discussion of the face as close-up and affect.

## *Bacon and the Shock of Colour*

Portraits by Francis Bacon are aptly described as fleshy, meaty heads rather than socially produced faces. Certainly, Bacon had a self-avowed fascination with meat, an obsession witnessed across his oeuvre, in *Painting* 1946 (fig. 6.1), *Figure with Meat* 1954, and *Second Version of "Painting 1946"* 1971, and carried into the pink, greys and greens of the flayed, fleshy tones of the portraits. These portraits are produced, in the spirit of *Gestaltung*, 'over against form' and are drawn in the diagrammatic shock of colour that Bacon quite literally throws on the canvas.

Bacon starts by throwing paint onto the canvas. This is his graph or diagram. The portraits owe their resemblance not to observation, memory or habit but to the violent splash of colour that functions as an inflective point out of which the figure-image and its power as affect arises. Bacon supports his method when he talks about trying to make the portrait that owes as little as possible to conventional standards of appearance: "my ideal would really be just to pick up a handful of paint and throw it at the canvas and hope that the portrait was there" (Sylvester 1975: 105–7). But as Bacon acknowledges, the graph is "inspired chance" and owes much to his experience as an artist and to his knowledge of his materials (96). Chance however is very different from the accident, and here we must distinguish, as Bacon does, between the irrational and the unconscious activity (96).

Bacon sees the throw of paint, and the consequent graph, as a defiance that owes all to "instinct"—he is most insistent on this word—and thinks that it cannot be explained (again we have the reversal of positing and of evaluation) (Sylvester 1975: 101). The linear brush-strokes, the patches of colour, the throwing, ragging and sponging, streaking and dashing are techniques which are actions of the hand not of the will or the eye (1975: 96). This is emphasized in the French where Deleuze translates Bacon's technique in precise terms as cleaning, sweeping and crumpling [*nettoyer, balayer ou chiffonner des endroits*], so indicating an active and manual resistance to representation and the centred perception (Deleuze 1981a: 65).

In the haphazard and complex composition of the graph, lines are drawn—aleatory series with their strange novel intersections, combinations, separations, and dislocations—and it this configuration that the face arises [*surgir*] as a complex entity that embodies an affective charge. In his work on cinema, Deleuze aligns the production of the affect with montage (and in particular with the work of Eisenstein) because, as he understands it, the montage works in the collision of independent shots (1985: 34–35). Bacon's graph works in the same way, as the collision of colour-marks. If such self-moving images are peculiarly cinematographic, as Deleuze thinks, then Bacon is a cinematographic painter—an artist of movement and affect, and what Bacon calls the "feeling of life" (Sylvester 1975: 43).

Bacon analyses his own painting as heads that arise by means of the material itself, in the mysterious fluidity if oils:

> For instance, the other day I painted a head of somebody, and what made the sockets of the eyes, the nose the mouth were, when you analysed them, just forms which had nothing to do with eyes or nose or mouth; but the

> paint moving from one contour to another made a likeness of this person I was trying to paint. ... Because this image is a kind of tightrope walk between what is called figurative painting and abstraction. It will go right out from abstraction but will really have nothing to do with it. It's an attempt to bring the figurative thing up onto the nervous system more violently and more poignantly. (Sylvester 1975: 12)

Bacon clearly understands his own work within the problematic of a new order of painting and sees this new appearance as the rendering visible of affect. In an interview with David Sylvester in May 1966 he states his aim: "What I want to do is to distort the thing far beyond the appearance, but in the distortion to bring it back to a recording of the appearance" (Sylvester 1975: 40).

There are then, for Bacon two moments of creativity, distortion and recording, and it through this creative method that he dismantles the face, and produces his abstract expressionist and shocking portraits. The first moment—distortion—requires Bacon to disaggregate the clichéd features of the generalized face. He refuses the structures of determinate faciality and returns to automatic movement and the chance throw of paint, and he uses that colour as a "graph" or diagram out of which he draws his portraits (Sylvester 1975: 56). The second moment of Bacon's creative process brings that distortion to a recording of the appearance, a record that stands as a monument to the compound of percepts and affects invented in the chance throw, and which refers only to that material expression. It is therefore the diagram and not the model that suggests appearance. As Bacon explains, "You survey the thing like you would a sort of graph and you see *within* this graph the possibilities of all types of facts being planted" (my emphasis) (Sylvester 1975: 56).

I want to stress that I am not reading Bacon's double method after Merleau-Ponty, as the actualization of a "virtually visible" depth, nor as a virtual–actual circuit (Merleau-Ponty 1961: 168). Indeed I am arguing that because the resemblance in Bacon's portraits depends on the differential relations of their genetic components (the noise of colour) Bacon stays with the determination of a virtual content. This means staying with what Deleuze terms differen*t*iation, and not differen*c*iating the face by distinguishing and specifying parts and features. Although Deleuze does not make the comparison, the two processes that comprise the system of the movement-image—differentiation and specification—seem to me to parallel the movement virtual–actual as set out in *Difference and Repetition,* that is differen*t*iation and differen*c*iation (1985: 28–9; 1968a: 206–207). Differen*t*iation (from *différentier*) is a mathematical operation of differential relation. Differen*c*iation (from *différencier*) is to become or to make different and is associated with the difference of species and disinguished parts.[10] In the context of the movement-image, this means that instead of moving to the action-image and specification, Bacon keeps hold of the modulation essential to differentia*t*ion and the affection-image (the affect) that surges up in the interval of that movement.

Bacon does not, therefore, take the work from virtual to actual, but renders visible the difference of the virtual. In Bacon we discover what Deleuze and Guattari recognize as "a completely different reality"—the virtual that becomes consistent, and which becomes an entity or Event equal to the components and modulations of its genesis (1991: 157). In contrast to the socially produced face and Deleuze and Guattari's parallel declaration that "The face is a politics", we have here the portrait that is indifferent to the specified and to the lived

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10 See also Patton's Preface to *Difference and Repetition* (Deleuze 1968a: xi).

state of affairs and to politics, but which is real because it embodies the movement of its own nonhuman becoming (Deleuze and Guattari 1980: 181, 169). We have the portrait that is a resemblance not because it is lifelike, but because the material is expressive and because the affect made with colour and line is extended to the particular smile or scream and the face (the close-up) that gathers and expresses that affect. Bacon therefore achieves the curious nonhuman becoming of man because the traditional closure of the portrait as likeness is dissolved, the virtual is realized in matter and the face opened to difference and new sensations (1991: 169).

In Bacon's work, the riot of colour and chance—the graph—is a "grid of information" (in the same way that, as Deleuze suggests in *The Fold*, Pollock's "all-over" paintings are) (Deleuze 1993a: 27). It is an informative composition and a construction of the smooth space of (*n*–*1)* dimensions, or as Deleuze calls it in *Cinema 1* "any-space-whatever" (Deleuze 1983: 111). Bacon stays true to that space because it is in the graph that new intersections are made and new sensations invented, as for instance when Bacon "sees through" the diagram that he can make the mouth go right across the face to make it like the opening of the whole head (1975: 107). Thus the portrait and its expression is consistent with, and works on the same level as, the material composition.

Take *Studies of George Dyer and Isabel Rawsthorne* 1970 (fig. 6.2) where the mouth is a smudged cacophony of red, white and blue, a sweep that extends across the cheek. Bulbous, overprinted, and ribbed, the mouth pours all over the face in an expressive but pictorial and surface vitality. It is an image drawn out from the flesh of the paint. In this way Bacon carries the distances of the irrational into appearance. As Bacon says in what Deleuze thinks is the most important passage in the interviews with Sylvester, he would "love to be able in a portrait to

make a Sahara of the appearance—to make it so like, yet seeming to have the distances of the Sahara" (1975: 56).

In Bacon's work we are always aware of the material fact of the paint and its configuration as a multiplicity. The heterogeneous but simultaneous components of the figure stand out clearly as individual strokes and marks. There are smudges, splashes, and whisps, layering, over-printing and erasure. Texture and rhythm. The power of the work is in the composition and in the modulations of that composite, and it is the expression—the pure affect—of that "matter-force" that is recorded in appearance and which touches the nervous system as terror or the compassionate look (Deleuze's examples), or as we shall see in Bacon, as the smile or the scream (Deleuze 1983: 103). What is important is that the insistence of the chance graph remains active in the portrait. Referring back to *Cinema 1* and Deleuze's analysis of the face as the close-up which expresses the pure affect as a "complex entity" or the "expressed", which I mentioned above, we can see that Bacon's great achievement is in keeping the "virtual conjunctions" of the graph—a complex, malleable and material mass—in play (Deleuze 1983: 103). Indeed, he not only keeps holds of that movement but secures it by giving it an existence, a 'life' and a 'body', and thus presenting it, or recording it, as a new nonhuman sensation of man.

## Bacon and the Emergent Contour

It is the abstract line produced in the movement of the material configuration of the graph or diagram which becomes a non-illustrational 'form' or Figure (Deleuze's capitalization), "as factual as possible and at the same time as deeply suggestive" (Deleuze 1983: 103; Sylvester 1975: 56). Because the Figure arises within the graph, it

is, strictly speaking, neither abstract nor figurative but figure-image. In contrast to Pollock, and to Abstract Expressionism, which he dismisses as "chancy" and as "sloppy", Bacon goes on the record and puts the matter of chance to work (Sylvester 1975: 92, 94). He draws the abstract line out of the collision of the diagram and extends it into the particular portrait. Hence his rationale that in distortion he brings the thing back to a recording of appearance. Thus, while he expresses the affect in the complex and animated entity that becomes the face as close-up—thus celebrating the new sensation of the nonhuman affect—Bacon also manages to save the contour and present a recognizable image 'of man'

Bacon uses the suggestion of the graph to draw out information, to change the units of measure, to construct new facts, to manipulate and to invent. That new order is recognised by Deleuze as a radical break through in painting. He observes that "certainly the diagram is chaos, a catastrophe, but it is also a germ of order or rhythm in line with [*par rapport au*] a new order of painting" (1981a: 67). But, while the catastrophe in Pollock depended on an explosive line without contours, Bacon's distinction, according to Deleuze, is that he saves the contour:

> To save the contour, nothing is more important for Bacon ... The diagram must not devour the whole picture, it must remain limited in space and time. It must remain operational and controlled. (1981a: 71)

However in this new order of painting the contour does not outline, but functions to return the portrait to its material structure which, independent of any definite form, will stand out as pure affect. I would add that in that dissolution, form dissolves into the virtual and its modulating zone of indiscernibility (the (*n–1*) dimensions of any-

space-whatever), and that in the act of saving the contour—or more accurately of finding a new order of the contour in the rhythm of the line—Bacon sections the 'chaos' of the virtual and creates a portrait that is consistent with its plane of composition. Hence the new order of the portrait as an entity or Event that remains indifferent to likeness and the lived state of affairs, but which nevertheless has a strange resemblance at the level of affect.

In Chapter Five of *Francis Bacon: Logique de la sensation* 'Periods and Aspects of Bacon: A Summing Up', Deleuze defines the contour as a "membrane" working between material structure and Form: a membrane with three functions—isolating, distorting and dissolving Form (Deleuze 1981a: 23–26).[11] In the light of the above discussion, I suggest a fourth function—drawing out or extracting—which extends the order and rhythm of the abstract line (the virtual) into the contour, so bringing the depth of virtuality to the surface and realizing it in the portrait.

Echoing the "torsion" [*la torsion*] of the fold—explained in *The Fold* (1993a) as the intertwined intersection of world and subject—Deleuze opens his text as follows, "The head as meat is man becoming animal.

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[11] A translation of this chapter appears within an article by Jonathan Keates entitled *Portraits in extremis*, which was published to coincide with the 1985 exhibition of painting by Bacon at *The Tate Gallery* London (Keates 1985). There is no reference to Deleuze's book (1981a) or translator cited in Keates's article. The text is entitled "Periods and Aspects of Bacon: A Summing Up' by Gilles Deleuze".

In the text in Keates, the French *Figure* is translated as Form. This is not a good translation as 'Figure' (with a capital) in Deleuze is specific to the emergent image and defies the determination that 'Form' implies. I have therefore retained Deleuze's terminology and use "Figure" throughout.

And in this becoming, the whole body strains to escape, the Figure strains to rejoin the material structure" (Deleuze 1993a: 26; Deleuze 1981a: 23). That escape to the malleable mass of the composition is the work of the contour. Deleuze finds three different movements of the contour in Bacon's work. Firstly, there is the contour that isolates the form from its ground by closing it in an armature as in the many works where the figure is boxed in, such as the triptych *Three Studies of Lucien Freud* 1969 (fig. 6.3). The second contour is the contour that contains and shrouds the Figure, as in *Study after Velásquez* 1950 or *Head* VI 1949 (fig. 6.4) where the Pope is contained behind a curtain. Here, as Deleuze says, "the Figure is blurred to infinity", and the only interval in the obscuration of the pleats of the curtain is the gapping chasm of the mouth (1981a: 25).[12] And thirdly, there is the contour that is smudged and streaked to produce a shrouded face or body, sometimes against a bright clean background, as in the triptych *Studies of the human body* 1970.

The use of all three contours in the same canvas, as in *Study after Velásquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X* 1953 (fig. 6.5), cuts across Sylvester's division of Bacon's oeuvre into three periods (Sylvester 1997: 173–78).[13] Deleuze too recognizes the coexistence of different

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[12] In *Cinema 1* (1983) the face caught in the shadows of foliage, or the strips of a venetian blind is described by Deleuze as Expressionist: "The Expressionist face concentrates on the intensive series, in both forms which disturb its outline and deprive it of its features" (1983: 92).

[13] Deleuze mentions this division but does not give a reference. However in an article of 1962 Sylvester does distinguish three key periods of Bacon's work: 1. (1949–56) Use of the space-frame around the figure and the floating head. 2. (1957) Bacon starts to use vivid colour and to treat the canvas "as a surface, not as a tank". 3. (1962 *Three studies for a Crucifixion*) The dissolution

movements of the contour throughout a three-phase development of Bacon's work, but he then admits a fourth and final phase in Bacon's work. The fourth stage involves a further mode of abstraction where form has dissolved and the Figure appears as pure affect, and in a way that is absolutely consistent with the plane of composition, as for example, in the *Jet of Water* 1979 (fig. 6.6), or *Sand Dune* 1981. But why does Deleuze see this as a separate recent period? Does this dissolution of form not also coexist within the other movements of the contour? Is there not in the earlier work, especially in the series of Popes, the jet of the abominable scream or the unbearable smile? And in later paintings, like *Triptych* May–June 1973 (fig. 6.7) does not the viewer suffer the pure affect of the spurt of white by George Dyer's back and on his foot—a projection which is never just vomit or sperm but the pain that shocks?

The act of rejoining the material structure is lyrically described by Deleuze in his summing up of aspects of Francis Bacon's work (Deleuze 1981a: 23–26). Deleuze sees the features of the face in Bacon's portraits—for example, *Study after Velásquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X* 1953 (fig. 6.5)—escaping through the screaming mouth, and the smile lingering after the disappearance of the body, like the smile of Lewis Carroll's Cheshire Cat. In this case, the body is obliterated for the benefit of the smile or the scream, which insists as an affect (joy, ecstasy, or terror) without its formal embodiment. Instead of the matter of paint being defined and formed by the definite contour, matter is dislocated and in continuous variation, and becomes expressive matter-force:

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of form and the aim "to make things that are formal yet coming to bits" (Sylvester 1997: 173–78).

> the precision of sensation, the neatness of the Figure, the rigour of the contour continue to act within the mark and the strokes which they don't so much efface, as give a power of vibration and non-location (the mouth that smiles or that cries)
> [*la précision de la sensation, la netteté de la Figure, la rigueur du contour continuaient d'agir sous la tache ou sous les traits qui ne les effaçaient pas, mais leur donnaient plutôt une puissance de vibration et d'illocalisation (la bouche qui sourit ou qui crie.*] (1981a: 71)

According to Sylvester, the power of vibration and disorientation (or non-location) does not arise out of a sloppy Abstract Expressionism but out of the precise but irrational *tachiste* or free mark (1975: 61). Such marks are irrational and irregular because they lack uniformity, shape and proportion, but at the same time, like the irrational number π, they are singular, indivisible, irreducible and open to the infinite. The point is that the chance mark is not just a-signifying but active in the dislocation and dissolution of form (Bacon's distortion), and in a new order of painting as the preservation of sensation (in which Bacon brings that distortion back to a recording of the appearance).

Bacon associates the power of colour in his portraits with what he calls the "violence of reality" (Sylvester 1975: 81). This violence is specifically that which resists the move to signification and which impacts on the nervous system rather than the mind. In Deleuzian terms this is the violence associated with the impulse-image because it is an expression of permanent upheaval, as characterized by the tension between the elements in Empedocles's world order, or the collision of shots in Eisenstein's cinematic montage, both of which I noted above. What is useful about Deleuze's introduction of the impulse-image viv-à-vis Bacon is that it is a movement characterized

by a lack of realism (actualization), non-naturalistic violence, and brutality (Deleuze 1983: 134).

### *The Impulse-Image and the Violence of Reality*

In the impulse-image, power and quality is always an aberrant violence that refers only to the force or impulse of its "virtual conjunctions" (Deleuze 1983: 133–40; 103). Deleuze describes the impulse-image as brutal and indecent, and, in reference to the films of Nicolas Ray (*Johnny Guitar* 1953), as "lyrical abstraction" and as "beauty through and in a permanent upheaval" (1983: 134–36). Finding an affinity between the cinema and painting, he references Bacon as a painter of the violent impulse-image. This is because the impulse-image lies somewhere between the affection-image and the action-image, where affect is never specified or translated into action and, like the scream, remains on the cusp of action as "violence in act [*en acte*]" (136).[14] Bacon's painting gives a body and a life to that impulse.

While he absolutely clear about the necessity of violence in his work, Bacon makes a distinction between the "violence of war" (Deleuze's "violence of action"), which he is not interested in, and the

[14] The derivation of 'impulse' from the Latin *impellere*, to strike against, situates the impulse-image as an image that works against completion in action or concept, and therefore as an image which works against appearance—counter-actualization. The additional implication of impulse as a sudden inclination both suggests the image as immediate and as fugitive, and I am mindful here of the ambivalence of the point of inflection, which I discussed in reference to Klee's 'grey' point, and which lies between the curve and its tangent and the *clinamen* which opens onto the line of flight (Deleuze and Guattari 1980: 361).

"violence of reality" (Deleuze 1983: 136; Sylvester 1975: 81). It is a distinction between narrative content and the signaletic materiality of paint: "When talking about the violence of paint, it's nothing to do with the violence of war. It's to do with an attempt to remake the violence of reality itself" (Sylvester 1975: 81).

Bacon's aim is to repeat the impulse of violence in paint, not to illustrate violence. Later in that same conversation of 1973, Bacon likens the limitation of seeing to a screened existence, a comment that resonates with Bergson's insight in *Matter and Memory* (1896) that representation (the conscious perception of matter) is a conversion that isolates, and diminishes—even violates (Bergson 1896: 35–36). Behind the screen of action is the "violence of reality", a brute reality that bursts through the screen of cognized appearance, as if disrupting perception with a brute materiality: "We nearly always live through screens—a screened existence. And I sometimes think, when people say my work looks violent, that perhaps I have from time to time been able to clear away one or two of the veils or screens" (Sylvester 1975: 82).

Deleuze describes the "violence in act" that he finds in Bacon as internal and as "*static*", but the adjective 'static' here does not denote stillness but the dynamism or shock of the electrical charge. "Violence in act" is a contained violence in the sense that it is a vibratory tension, and here Deleuze gives the example of a character trembling with violence. This points to violence as a vibratory charge, and to the impulse as a brutal force that exists between affect and action.

Here Peirce's notion of Secondness is useful, because Secondness is that mode of the image that, while associated with the action-image by Peirce, is the force that resists, disturbs and shocks. I suggest that when that force is kept in play and there is no closure on action (as in

Bacon's paintings where the actual face is not differentiated) the image has a tendency to counter-actualization, and is best understood as working 'in act' between the affection-image and the action-image, and is therefore better aligned with the impulse-image. As Pierce explains Secondness is a matter-force that works against the completion of actualization; it therefore does not entail the completion inherent to the action-image, which is the actualization of qualities in a state of things, and that therefore requires the fixity of a specific space-time. In 'The Principles of Phenomenology' Peirce acknowledges that Secondness is not the mind's creation but the "fact" of matter that works against the will (1940: 74–97). It is active and real, not an unmaterialized quality (red, hard or bitter) but "matter": "But we feel facts resist our will. That is why facts are proverbially called brutal. Now mere qualities do not resist. It is matter that resists" (1940: 77). The factual behaviour or transformation of the thing under the knife-edge is one example of Secondness because it is the weight and force of the thing that counts. Whether something is hard or soft is an imperceptible, immaterial and incorporeal fact of behaviour and a mark of its resistance to the knife.

Secondness is that which is directly experienced rather than known through the structure of generalization (as happens in the mental or relation-image). For Peirce, "experience" is broader that perception and denotes the "*shock*" (Peirce's italics) of sudden changes of perception—such as the abrupt change of note of a whistle or the slip of the knife—and is met with a certain resistance because it forces one to think otherwise (Peirce 1940: 88). In Bacon, a similar shock is experienced both in the disjunction between the recognizable face and the catastrophe of the thrown colour (a counter-actualization), and at a

material level in the violence of the affect produced in the impulsive movement of colour and expressed in the portrait.[15]

Secondness is the imperceptible experience that works against appearance—the resistance of a door, the movement of a weathercock or clock, the touch of the mouth (Peirce 1940: 115, 275). With your shoulder against the door you experience or feel the tension between effort and resistance, a force that Peirce calls "an unseen, silent, and unknown resistance" (76) It is this impact that Peirce calls Secondness and a "pure sense of actuality" (76). Secondness is therefore a sign of material–force, of the unexpected, and of "facts" which we experience as the brutal force or "violence of reality" that impacts on the nervous system, and which challenge our perspective or make us think differently—the spontaneous, the unpredictable and the shocking (87–8). In Peirce's vocabulary Secondness is real rather than symbolic: "In the idea of reality, Secondness is predominant; for the real is that which insists upon forcing its way to recognition as something *other* than the mind's creation" (79). "There is no reason in it" (76).

It is this resistance, this Secondness, which Bacon captures in the throw of paint and in inspired chance, when his aim is precisely to counter the generalized, perceived image with the imperceptible reality of particularity. For instance in 1974, he talks about the manipulation

[15] Nietzsche talks about a similar resistance to the evaluation and opinion entailed in normal perception in his analysis of active forces. This is the force that works against the reactivity of generalization and demands an "inversion of the value-positing eye" [*Diese Umkehrung des werte-setzen-den Blicks*]. See: Nietzsche 1887: 21 [22] and Deleuze 1962: 56. This inversion of the eye implies that the eye give up its position as the exteriorized and determining centre of the punctual system, and instead become the roving, acentred and interior "eye of matter" that we saw in Klee's work, and which Deleuze finds in the automatic and self-moving image (Deleuze 1983: 81).

of photographs of the body, and in particular images from Muybridge's volume *The Human Figure in Motion* 1887:

> I manipulate the Muybridge bodies into the form of bodies I have known. But, of course, in my case, with this disruption all the time of the image—or distortion, or whatever you like to call it—it's an elliptical way of coming to the appearance of that particular body. (Sylvester 1975: 117–8)

Secondness disrupts the representational model because it is an image or phenomena—what is rendered visible and thus what appears—that does not resemble something else, as in the oppositional model of representation, but which has an elliptical reference, like the relation of the shot to the hole, the resistance of the door, or the scream to the mouth. The important point is that in Secondness it is the shot, resistance or the scream that is expressed and which stands on its own as an impulse-image. Thus, the reality of the scream in act [*in acte*] rings out long after the horror of war, and it is this "violence of reality" that the work of art preserves (Deleuze 1991: 161).

Secondness is not ordinal but cardinal. There is Firstness in the Second, which is an index only of its own Firstness—its redness or blackness—a Representum qua thing expressive only of the configuration of its composition and genesis, and which captures its "colouring sensation". It is red not blood. Take Bacon's chasmic mouths in his Pope series, portraits that are "completely irrational from the point of view of illustration" (Sylvester 1975: 12). As if torn away from the meaning that is secured in the determinate space-time of the action-image and thrown back on fetishistic fragments of the impulse-image, the scream is the impulse of an aberrant violence and works as a sign or symptom of the virtual conjunctions of the any-

space-whatever.[16] It is the white noise of the cry in the wilderness; the cry that bears witness, that Seconds.

The distinction of Bacon's work is that that symptom is given a reality in its embodiment as the specific face or body, and becomes a real possibility of man. This is something that Bacon recognizes when he talks about his particular way of painting being more poignant than illustration because it brings the "violence of reality" into the face:

> What has never been analyzed is why this particular way of painting is more poignant than illustration. I suppose because it has a life completely of its own. It lives on its own, and therefore transfers the essence of the image more poignantly. So that the artist may be able to open up or rather, should I say, unlock the valves of feeling and therefore return the onlooker to life more violently (Sylvester 1975: 17).

In his magnificent painting *Triptych* May–June 1973 (fig. 6.7) Bacon makes the "violence of reality" a possible by incorporating or embodying the violent affect of George Dyer's death, a death in which 'a life' is revealed as a pure Event. It is a life and a death that exists only in its as realized in the material of paint so that the paint itself becomes expressive. This death does not exist as a concept in any absolute form, and is therefore an intensely individual singular death. Bacon dissolves form and returns the figure of George Dyer to its becoming-animal where the contortion of the flesh struggles against its refinement and dignity as the personalized human body. That neat representation is ruined, and instead we find that the violent reality of

[16] I am using symptom here in the Nietzschian sense, as something that reflects a state of forces. See: Deleuze 1962: x.

the body as meat is indeed possible as an embodied reality. Here is the singular essence, the 'jet', of vomit, of shit and of sperm, and the horror of the suffering flesh. Here is a life recorded and caught in a matter of expression, and a Figure that is an impulse-image that stuns and shocks. It is a horror that is not only rendered visible but preserved as a celebration of the moment of indistinction when the humanity of George Dyer's life and death is dissolved, and only its nonhuman becoming exists.

## *Violence, the Montage and the Material Sublime*

In *Cinema 2*, in the chapter headed 'Thought and Cinema', Deleuze develops his thinking about "the image that itself moves in itself" as a sublime conception of art (1985: 156). In keeping with the later definition of the autonomous image in *What is Philosophy?* (1991)—"The work of art as "a being of sensation and nothing else: it exists in itself"—he states that "It is only when movement becomes automatic that the artistic essence of the image is realized" (Deleuze and Guattari 1991: 164; Deleuze 1985: 156). And he goes on to argue that that autonomy produces a shock to thought and touches the nervous system directly (156).

Deleuze gives this image (which because of its definition as autonomous and acentred is a nonhuman becoming) the name "*nooshock*" after Peirce's noosign, which is an image that goes beyond itself towards something that can only be thought (Deleuze's italics) (1985: 156). A "nooshock" goes towards something that can only be felt. This shock is not the shock of the "figurative violence of the represented"—Bacon's "violence of war"—where force is actualized in a determinate space-time (as found in what Deleuze thinks of as

"bad cinema"). Rather, it is the shock that is "the very form of communication of movement in images" and the "violence of reality", like the gaseous explosion in Pollock, or the disjunctive connections of the aleatory series in Klee, and like the 'jet' of Bacon's diagram (Deleuze 1985: 157).

Deleuze uses Eisenstein's theory of montage to think through how the communication of images (matter in movement) in the "nooshock" works and how it produces the brutal impulse that hits the nervous system. He understands it as the conflict or tension b between simultaneous shots or 'moments'. In 'The Dramaturgy of Film Form' (1929), Eisenstein maintains that art is always conflict because it manifests the clash of opposing passions and the opposition between organic inertia and creativity (1929: 45–163).

According to Eisenstein the basic element, dramatic principle and methodology of art is montage, an aesthetic technique that opens the work to the abstract line of autonomous movement. Unlike his colleague Vsevolod I. Pudovkin who understood the succession of film shots as the unrolling of a complete idea, Eisenstein insists on simultaneity: "each sequential element is perceived not *next* to each other, but on *top* of the other" (1929: 49). He therefore defines montage as "an idea that arises from the collision of independent shots" and it is in this rhythmic disjunction that the potential energy of the plastic shot becomes a force and an affect (49).

Eisenstein's own example of montage is the roar of the stone lions in his film *Battleship Potemkin* 1925 where an artificially produced image of motion is created in the collision of shots of three different lions, in three different postures. This image is taken up by Deleuze, who notes Eisenstein's achievement: "('and the stones have roared')" (Deleuze 1983: 89). The 'whole' image of stone lions roaring is only possible

because, firstly the lion is shot in close-up and its form is dislocated, and secondly because the component shots form an autonomous series or montage. We move from the stone to the scream, and a new reality. The stone roars.[17]

Eisenstein makes much of the comparison between painting and cinema. He notes the importance of "spatial disproportion" and "irregularity" in art, citing Renoir's manifesto for *La Société des Irrégularistes* (1884) (1929: 51). He also supports Camille Mauclair's observation that artists as diverse as Michelangelo, Rembrandt, Delacroix and Rodin threw aside "the ballast of exactitude as conceived by our simplifying reason and our ordinary eyes" (51).[18] However, painting does not just construct spatial disproportion but, in the visual vibrations set up by irregularity and colour, creates the dynamic effect of temporal disproportion, and here Eisenstein gives the example of the cubist painter Léger, and the mobility of Toulouse-Lautrec's disjunctive figures. For Eisenstein then, the great painting shares his characterization of cinema as montage and as "visual counterpoint" (Eisenstein 1929: 52).

In *Cinema 2* the montage is embraced within a concept of the material sublime and becomes the material-image or figure-image. (1985: 158–9). This is the image that, in the gyrations of its internal

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[17] The famous image of The Nanny's scream, also from *Battleship Potemkin*, works in the same way: the first shot of the nanny's face is seen simultaneously with that of her with cracked glasses, shot between the eyes. The face screams. Bacon was fascinated by this image of the scream.
See: Eisenstein 1949: fig. 7.

[18] Mauclair is writing of Rodin's drawings in her preface to an edition of Baudelaire's *Les fleurs du mal*, illustrated by Rodin and published in 1940.

composition and the impulsive movement of a signaletic material, produces the "totally physiological sensation" of the shock-wave or nervous vibration. Deleuze references Eisenstein and describes it as "an 'orgy of sensations', a visual music which is like a mass, fountains of cream, fountains of luminous water, spurting fires ..." (158–9). This vivid description is of a sequence from *The General Line* by Eisenstein who according to Deleuze develops "a pathos-filled power of imagination which reaches the limits of the universe" (159).

As Deleuze explains it, the sublime in Eisenstein is a "dialectical sublime" and is constituted in two inseparable moments: a circuit that goes from percept to concept, and from concept to affect. It is the vibratory charge of the gaseous image (percept)—here called a "harmonics"—which has an *ex-statis* shock effect on thought. It forces thought to think itself, and returns thought to image and concept to affect, and to the physiological shock of the 'I feel' (1985: 158). Far from 'presenting the unpresentable' as a resistance to or displacement of the subject, as for instance Lyotard's sublime does, in Deleuze's radicalization of the sublime, the affect is "the expressed" of a precise configuration of matter, and rendered visible in the sign of affect (here the impulse-image), as expressed for instance, in the exquisite scream of the close-up or face.[19]

For Deleuze the movement of the "dialectical sublime" is not exclusive to the cinematographic image, but characteristic of the more general "artistic image" (Deleuze 1985: 156). Deleuze points out that Eisenstein talks about the paintings of Da Vinci and El Greco as if they were cinematographic images (156). So while he thinks that the

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[19] For Lyotard 'presenting the unpresentable' involves an "it is felt ..." and an abeyance of the need for presenting the unpresentable within rationalized thought.

difference between painting and the cinema is that, whereas for the pictorial image the mind has to make the movement, movement is the "immediate given" of the cinematographic image, he does admit the possibility of painting that works cinematographically. In Bacon, for example, the fact that the contour as "membrane" forces the portrait to rejoin the material structure means that the portrait as a 'whole' exists in itself as movement—as 'cinematographic' montage and as a heterogeneous complex entity.

While it would be contrived to map Eisenstein's moments of the sublime directly onto Bacon's two moments of distortion and record—his aim to distort the thing, but in that distortion to bring it back to a recording of the appearance—Deleuze's reading shows up a keen similarity (Sylvester 1975: 40). Deleuze's association of montage with the material sublime entails the same opposition to the complete and conceptual image found in Bacon's distortion of appearance, while the return to matter makes the figure-image an entity, or record of appearance. In Bacon, the face is overtaken by the rhythms of the montage, and the 'whole' dissolves into the simultaneous depth of the plastic "malleable mass": streaks and swirls, white here, green there, the pink of flesh. This is most clearly seen in the almost lurid colours of the self-portraits, such as *Two Studies for a Self-Portrait* 1972 and especially *Study for Self-Portrait* 1973 (fig. 6.8), where the face is a mass of pinks, greens, oranges, purples and blues—a noise of colour.

*Study for Self-Portrait* 1973 is a particularly interesting work because unlike the full face portraits like *Self-Portrait* 1970, *Three Studies for Self-Portrait* 1972, and *Self-Portrait* 1972, the forehead, nose and chin of this profile are accurately and sharply defined, and appear as a silhouette against the sky blue background. However, far from compromising the dissolution of the face, this fine contour serves, like the armature of

the earlier work, to exacerbate the isolation of the figure-image, and to reinforce this expressionist image as a specific portrait.

Because of this resistance to the concept and generality of the 'whole', and the poignancy of the affect, Deleuze echoes Eisenstein and uses the terms "drunkeness" and "pathos", rather than logos, to characterize the peculiar logic of sensation: "The whole is no longer the logos which unifies the parts, but the drunkeness, the pathos which bathes them and spreads out in them" (Deleuze 1985: 159). This vocabulary of intoxication resonates with Deleuze's much earlier discussion of "unbounded, uncoordinated and inorganic difference" in *Difference and Repetition* (1968a) where, anticipating his later work on the cinema and on painting, Deleuze concludes that, if it is to break through the "iron collars of representation" and work "without image", the greatest effort of philosophy must be "inventing theological, scientific and aesthetic techniques which allow it to integrate the depth of difference in itself ... of allowing it to capture the power of giddiness, intoxication and cruelty, and even of death" (262).[20] This demand would not be lost on Bacon, who felt that he was helped to paint more freely through drink, drugs and tiredness (Sylvester 1975: 13).

### *'Making' the Difference*

One of Bacon's favourite paintings is Degas's pastel *After the Bath* 1903. It is the backbone that intrigues him. The top of the spine protudes, arising out of the flesh. Suddenly and perhaps surprisingly

[20] In *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze identifies four "iron collars of representation": identity in the concept, opposition in the predicate, analogy in the judgement, and resemblance in perception (1968a: 137–38, 262).

the spine is exuded, bone co-existent with flesh. A similar simultaneity between flesh and bone was something of an obsession for Bacon. He talks about the Degas in his second interview with David Sylvester in 1966, and in 1970 he paints a triptych *Three Studies of the Male Back* (fig. 6.9) where the spine is a scar on the blues and pinks of the wounded, oozing flesh. This is no exoskeleton; the fine dark line and the sharp white stroke of the spine are bones that are an *après coup* suggested after the material fact of flesh. A record after the fact. It is not that the bone determines a 'fleshed out' body shape, and thus actualized as a state of affairs, but that the bone projects in all its skeletal detail. It is a contour realized in the flesh and thus a nonhuman becoming that becomes an entity and a body.

This is more obvious in the French when, with *Three Studies for a Crucifixion* 1962 (fig. 6.10) and *Crucifixion* 1965 in mind, Deleuze describes the back-bone as "*surajouté, dans un jet de peinture au hasard et après coup*" [added on top, in the chance throw of paint and after the event] (1981a: 20). Deleuze also talks about the emergence of the head in terms of arising using *faire surjir*. "*défaire le visage, retrouver ou faire surgir la tête sous le visage*" [to strip the face, to find or to make the head arise from under the face], a vocabulary which keeps hold of the sense of immediacy and action that is not necessarily implied in the English "arise" (1981a: 19).

Bacon describes this inversion of form graphically when he imagines images arising from rivers of flesh: "I hope to be able to do figures arising out of their own flesh with their bowler hats and their umbrellas and make them figures as poignant as a Crucifixion" (83). The figures arise without ground [*sans fond*] emerging in the autonomous and continuous variation of the diagram to appear, not as a defined form, but as meat. The parallel "poignancy" of the flesh and the Crucifixion is already expressed in Bacon's early work *Three Studies*

*for a Crucifixion* 1962 (fig. 6.10) in which the right-hand canvas a screaming carcass hangs upside down. This study was inspired by the Cimabue *Crucifixion* 1272–4, an image which Bacon thinks of as a "worm crawling down the cross ... just moving, undulating down the cross" (Sylvester 1975: 14).

In the raw product—meat—flesh and bone are on the same plane and existent in a common zone [*la zone commune/la zone d'indiscernabilité*] (Deleuze 1981a: 21). Deleuze goes on to explain this common zone as the 'depth' before the human, where there is no difference (resemblance) between man and animal. Rather than an "arrangement" of the human or the animal it is, he says, "an identity of depth" [*une identité de fond*] (21). The *identité de fond* is a zone of indiscernibility where there is no fleshing out, no outline, reference or skeleton, and where the reality of the body exists in the indetermination of invisibility, in the virtuality of modulations and the matter-force of the composition and its affect—the vulnerability of the flesh, the smile, or the scream that is *la ressemblance sensible*.[21]

The body is in this sense the entity that Deleuze and Guattari identify with the Event in *What is Philosophy?*. It is distinct from and indifferent to actualization "since its reality does not depend on it" (1991: 156). It is an event that is "immaterial, incorporeal, unliveable:

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[21] Bacon suggests that it is the tension required of direct feelings that is missing from Pollock's "free marks", and that this is because their spontaneity is associated with the unconscious rather than with an intelligent and conscious irrationality (Sylvester 1975: 60). In his article on Turner, *Catastrophism in Philosophy?*, James Williams argues that it is by "'controlling' catastrophe" that Bacon avoids the loss of intensity we see in the "manual confusion" of abstract expressionism (Williams 1997: 244).

pure reserve" (156). In the context of painting, and of the work of Francis Bacon in particular, Deleuze calls this Event the reality of becoming [*la réalité du devenir*] (1981a: 21). In my own reading of Bacon, I return to Deleuze's first attempt "to 'do philosophy" *Difference and Repetition* (1968a) (again finding an affinity between the first and the last of Deleuze's philosophy) in order to understand that "reality of becoming" as a groundless repetition that, because it arises in the immaterial, incorporeal and unliveable Event, is a repetition that produces the singular resemblance of *la ressemblance sensible*.[22] In that sense, the resemblance that we see in a Bacon portrait is "a repetition that 'makes' the difference", and which, by including difference, renders visible the "terrible power" of depth and the virtual (Deleuze 1968a: 292). The face is fractured and deformed, and realized in matter not as a determined and grounded recognizable form, but as the monstrous head made visible. It is therefore a portrait that resonates with philosophy as 'thought without image' because as painting without image it is an attempt to 'do painting' in a manner analogous to the 'doing' of philosophy in *Difference and Repetition*.

The question of ground is not to be dismissed lightly. It is a matter taken up in some detail by Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition* where the question of identity and determination—and the well grounded repetition of representation—is challenged by the "demonic images, stripped of resemblance" (simulacra and phantasms) that distort such neat determinations, and which undermine the homogeneous extensity of the ground with the more profound [*profond*] depth and artistic reality of a repetition which is *Ungrund* or groundless [*sans-fond*] (1968a:

[22] As I mentioned in my introduction, Deleuze himself distinguishes *Difference and Repetition* as his first attempt "to 'do philosophy'', as opposed to writing history of philosophy in his studies of Hume, Spinoza, Nietzsche and Proust. See: Deleuze 1968a: xv.

127, 229). In his conclusion to *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze goes on to make particular reference to the face, and to identify groundlessness with depth and with "an autonomous and faceless existence" (275).

> Something of the ground rises to the surface, without assuming any form but, rather, insinuating itself between the forms; a formless base, an autonomous and faceless existence. This ground which is now on the surface is called depth or groundlessness. Conversely, when they are reflected in it, forms decompose, every model breaks down and all faces perish, leaving only the abstract line as the determination absolutely adequate to the indeterminate, just as the flash of lightening is equal to the night, acid equal to the base, and distinction adequate to obscurity as a whole: monstrosity. (275)

Deleuze distinguishes three levels of repetition and it is worth briefly rehearsing them here, not least because, like Bacon, Deleuze is anti-illustration and aligns anti-illustration with groundlessness (1968a: 285–94). Deleuze claims that the highest object of art is not imitation but repetition: "Art does not imitate, above all because it repeats; it repeats all the repetitions [habit, profound and ultimate or ontological], by virtue of an internal power (an imitation is a copy, but art is simulation, it reverses copies into simulacra)" (1968a: 293). The portrait as a *ressemblance sensible* also reverses imitation because its form rejoins material structure to become consistent on the plane of composition. It can therefore be understood as an ontological repetition, a non-mediated "difference without concept" (25, 288).

The first of Deleuze's three repetitions is the passive "habit of living" (74). This is the *grounded* and mimetic copy which is explained in terms of the Same, but which relies on the negation of one image

standing in for another; each exclusive, each a spatial and temporal presence, each a discontinuous case. Here repetition is horizontal and "bare" and difference is understood only as generality (1968a: 73). Deleuze associates it with Habitus.

In the second mode of repetition, aligned with Eros—"the seeker of memories"—and with Mnemosyne—"the treasure of the pure past"—the 'whole' does not depend on comparison and generality but on the contracted 'totality' of duration as the *grounding* of all cases or copies (274). Cardinal numbers, for instance, imply the more profound ordering of the ordinal number because the 'third' entails both the first and the second, a contraction that gives 'three' its weight and depth by introducing the displacement between one and two into the third.

Deleuze's own example of the copy is the abandoned snake skin; a material 'case' and indifferent epidermis which has lost the animation of the profound repetition which secretes it. This second mode of Deleuzian repetition is vertical and "clothed"; its elements are the displacements and disguises that are embraced in the contracted depth of cardinality (287).

In his use of photography as an impetus to the portrait, particularly the studies of animals and people in motion by Edward Muybridge, Bacon plays with both images of habit and of memory, finding in the photographic 'shot' that disruptive difference that jars with the represented image, and which ultimately opens up a space for an engagement with the more radical acentred difference of the diagram, difference which is not *between* repetitions but which reverses [*renverser*] the economy of Sameness with "a repetition which 'makes' the difference" (292).

Bacon used a wide range of photographs: shots taken of himself in automatic booths, stills from films, medical and radiography plates, photographs of big game, and most frequently photographic portraits of his friends, which he commissioned from John Deakin, and Muybridges' sequences from *The Human Figure in Motion* 1887. When asked by Sylvester what especially interested him about the photograph Bacon talks about displacement and the acentred image, and relates that to the requirement to capture a new reality by journeying through the depth of the painting:

> Well, I think one's sense of appearance is assaulted all the time by photography and by film ... I think it's the slight remove from fact, which returns me onto the fact more violently. Through the photographic image I find myself beginning to wander into the image and unlock what I think of as its reality more than I can by looking at it. (Sylvester 1975: 30)

Deleuze's third repetition is the ultimate or ontological repetition, a *groundless* repetition. It does not replace or suppress the repetitions of habit or memory but introduces into their displacements and disguises the more radical powers of difference—divergence and decentring. This repetition is an ungrounding which takes the transformative powers of the repetition to a new reality—the leap to the non-human transmutation of the face at its extreme undoing, and to the head. It is this "repetition for itself" that Eisenstein uses in the rhythmic resemblance set up in montage, and which we see in Bacon's use of the diagram where he employs the unconditioned, groundless chance mark (*tachiste*) to insert the raw power of colour into the familiar shapes of the human image.

In this third mode of Deleuzian repetition, it is not a case of supplementing the habitual image but of inserting the divergent, decentring and distortive power of the diagram into the portrait, and thus "'making' the difference" by making the ground rise to the surface and realizing the portrait as the expressed—what Bacon calls the "violence of reality", and which is for Deleuze that intoxicating depth of difference where all (human) faces perish (Sylvester 1975: 81; Deleuze 1968a: 262).

It is the new sensation produced in the diagram that is drawn in the portrait, *which carries a likeness that is not dependent on the* similarities of appearance. From *traire*, the portrait is a drawing that draws out. And, like *tirer*, it is a drawing out, or up, or from, or to; it is not a drawing of. It preserves the animation of the thing independently of model, viewer or artist: Michel Leiris' smile, the scream of the pope, the grin of the Cheshire cat. It is therefore not a repetition of habit or memory, but a repetition that preserves sensation. Thus portraiture is a drawing where replication is not the point, but the groundless repetition that makes the difference is. And what is drawn (*tirer*)? A plan, profit, a conclusion, and information. The force of the thing is appropriated from the grid of information. And herein is the difference. The portrait touches the sense of its subject, not a presupposed identity. And it is this sensation that is recorded or preserved in the image. The record is a symptom after the fact, and conveys information, carrying the irrationality of the diagram and signalling its force as matter in movement. It quite literally marks the matter–force of the diagram, bringing that force into the figure-image, and capturing the eloquence of paint in the portrait. How rightly then Deleuze and Guattari's transpose Peirce's semiotic signs to the question of territorialization (1980: 531 note 41).

### *Analogue esthétique*

In a curious passage in the conclusion to *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze explains difference—disguise and displacement—as constituent of repetition and, on insisting that the thickness (depth) of repetition must not be suppressed, notes that repetition must be "confounded with analogy itself" (1968a: 271). His concern is that the interiority of relation should not be lost, and here he refers back to what he calls the "unresolvable difficulty" of analogy, that "it must relate being to particular existents, but as the same time it cannot say what constitutes their individuality" (38). Analogy thus works to modulate rather than to generalize, and allows the identity of the particular existents (concepts) to subsist "either in confused form or in virtual form" (33). With this proviso of analogy in mind, we can then see that when in *Francis Bacon: Logique de la sensation* Deleuze identifies the techniques of painting "without image" as an "*Analogue esthétique*", aesthetic techniques that work in an "'analogical' manner" and that affirm the virtual form as a pre-individual and differential difference—a difference without concept that produces *la ressemblance sensible* (1968a: 271).

In a short discussion of Cézanne in *Francis Bacon: Logique de la Sensation* Deleuze is adamant that the diagram works in an analogical manner. He likens the diagram to the analogical synthesiser or modulator, "In short, *it is perhaps the notion of modulation in general* (and not of similitude) which is appropriate to our understanding of the nature of the analogical language [*langue*] or of the diagram" (1981a: 76). It is this image of the modulator that holds onto the pragmaticism of the diagram as composition. The possibilities for composition are infinite, but for it to work, and for the contour to be drawn out of the abstract line, the intersections of the *tachiste* must be precise. A collapse

into chaos would mean that the diagram was a dysfunctional mess [*gâchis*]. This peculiar use of analogy is not to say that analogy rests on any similitude or that there is any one to one correspondence of parts, but rather that the composition brings to the surface the depth of the virtual and the 'impulse' of those virtual conjunctions. For example, when Bacon nails the flesh onto the bed in *Lying Figure with Hypodermic Syringe* 1963 (fig. 5.11), he uses the syringe as a symbol doubling the limp heaviness of the layered paint with its green and red underbelly oozing into the flayed, almost transparent surface of the mattress. The matter–force of the fleshy meaty colour is exactly that of the body, convulsed in exhaustion. Such is the mystery and the eloquence of paint.

Like Cézanne, Bacon does not make analogies, but work within an *Analogue esthétique*, creating assemblages of lines and colours which suggest relations, postures and attitudes, and from which new varieties (aleatory series) are drawn and within which new entities are formed (1981a: 75). The variable relations and differential differences of the virtual—the depth of difference and its power of divergence and decentring—are included in the portrait and seen in the dissolution of the face and the strange new contours of the head.

This is why Deleuze can say that Bacon is "cerebrally pessimist, nervously optimist" (1981a: 31). The representational thinking that separates expression and form demands a restrictive aesthetic ideal and is pessimistic, whereas in Bacon's paintings the impulse of surface expression is nervously optimistic because it works the open potential of difference 'in itself'. What is the mouth if it is not this smudged pad of paint, soft and dense with a shadow of red? Moist and malleable. Kissing, licking, salivating, screaming. Bacon discovers the force of the mouth, shocking, terrible, and violent—horrific, even demonic. It impacts on our senses and gets on our nerves. As Deleuze suggests "it

is a question of causing a little of Dionysus's blood to flow in the organic veins of Apollo" (1968a: 262). This is also what makes Bacon a tragic artist in the Nietzschean sense, "The tragic artist is not a pessimist—it is precisely he who affirms all that is questionable and terrible in existence, he is Dionysian ..." (Nietzsche 1889: 39).

### *The Eloquent Scream of Paint*

To paint the scream or the cry, and to paint the smile was Bacon's first obsession, famously the subject of his works based on Velásquez's *Portrait of Pope Innocent X* 1650: *Head VI* 1949 (fig. 6.4), *Pope II* 1951, and *Study after Velásquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X* 1953 (fig. 6.5) (Sylvester 1975: 34, 50). Inspired by a second-hand book with hand-coloured plates of diseases of the mouth, Bacon became interested in illustrations of the mouth, but it was Poussin's *The Massacre of the Innocents* 1630–1, and the still of the screaming nanny from Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* that preoccupied him. Two rigid spasms and two hauntingly powerful screams. Take for example, Bacon's *Head VI* 1949 (fig. 6.4). The intense black hole of the mouth compels a response as the eye hesitates over the light detail of the teeth, adverts to the white curve echoed in the cuff and the collar, and dallies with the bare, spare suggestion of the purple robe. A dark curtain of thin brush-strokes draws a haze down over the face, blinded and blotted out with an abruptness that returns us to the depths of the empty scream, that spasm trapped in the armature.

Bacon acknowledges the tension between figuration, distortion and the record of appearance in his work. He discriminates between the "fact" of appearance and his own "invention" of appearance from illustration and the "image", arguing that it is in the distortion of the image that he is able to record fact, and that the methods by which this

is done are "artificial" (Sylvester 1975: 40, 100).[23] He starts with the chance throw and draws out the portrait that is suggested by that configuration, thus securing the impulsive nonhuman becoming of the virtual conjunction in the face. As I discussed, Bacon talks about his method as a concern with "the violence of paint", and that violence as an attempt to remake "the violence of reality itself" (81). This violence is surely Peirce's "brute reality" because the immediacy of Bacon's artificiality gives it the force of Secondness; it is "accidentally actual" and an "unconditional necessity" (Peirce 1940: 90).

I equate this "artificiality" with the move to abstraction and to painting as a material composition, self-movement and the strange 'reason' of the multiple, the dizzy, drunken logic of sensation and of difference 'in itself'. The subjects of Bacon's portraits are Lucien Freud, Isabel Rawsthorne, George Dyer ... Bacon himself. There is at once a radical distortion and a haunting familiarity, no likeness [*ressemblant*] but a curious sensible resemblance [*ressemblance sensible*]. Facial features are distorted far beyond appearance, but it is in that distortion that the material becomes expressive and the fact of the subject recorded—Lucian Freud's melancholy, Isabel Rawsthorne's self-depreciation and downcast eyes, George Dyer's pride ....

In *Study for a Self-Portrait* 1982 (fig. 6.12), Bacon sits, curled introspectively to one side of a bare room, alone in a sea of blue and beige. His face is isolated by the contour of a frame or mirror, and the fine ring of a magnifier; it is shrouded and blurred by the catastrophic cloud of the haze exuding from that armature, and exploded in a mesh

[23] The artificial, like Eisenstein's *art-ificiality* is man-made. Bacon brutalises the man-thought with the man-made, subordinating the eye to the hand and disrupting the rational image with the irrationality and specificity of material artificiality.

of bulbous reds and textured whites, set sharp against the flat and solid plane of the black sweater and the stab of the blue dart that draws the mouth into dissolution. A monument to Francis Bacon arises.

# CONCLUSION

## The Monument and the Existence of the Possible

# CONCLUSION

*Perhaps the peculiarity of art is to pass through the finite in order to rediscover, to restore the infinite.*

Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* (1991: 197)

In conclusion to this thesis I want to return to the equation that Deleuze and Guattari make in *What is Philosophy?* (1991) between pure sensation and the nonhuman; between the percept and nonhuman landscapes of nature, and between the affect and the nonhuman becoming of man (1991: 169). Deleuze and Guattari understand the percept and the affect as going beyond the human and lived state of the perception or the affection, and explain this, not as a return to a pre-human amorphous chaos, but precisely as that move from representation to abstraction that I see in the painting of Mondrian, Pollock, Klee and Bacon.

I have argued that while representation is essentially a human and centred expression that defines the object and produces perceptions and affections. In contrast to representation, abstraction deals with the asignificant and with the pure sensation of percept and affect. It thus reverses opinion and description, and goes beyond forms of representation to work "without image".

In his own work on painting *Francis Bacon: Logique de la sensation* (1981a), Deleuze identifies the abstract line as a contour that emerges in the material composition and describes that asignifying line as "like the sudden appearance of another world" [*comme le surgissement d'un autre monde*], and in *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari argue that it is the task of art to extract and to "render visible" that other world (Deleuze 1981a: 66; Deleuze and Guattari 1991: 163–99). But, I go further than that, and suggest that by embodying that new reality painting is not just making visible but making possible. It thus

demands that we rethink the entity produced when the artist 'thinks in painting' because this entity does not work in an exteriorized, centred space–time zone but in abstraction.

For instance, Pollock creates the catastrophic new haptic spaces of the nonhuman landscape by insisting on a radical abstraction wrought by his return to the manual. His "all-over" paintings are glorious explosive landscapes; landscapes that embrace the complex depths of the line with infinite inflection, and which exist as surfaces that, because they function as a machinic chaosmosis, embody the very multiplicity of that inflection. They are paintings without a beginning or an end. We saw in Klee's "walk with a line" how the material of painting becomes expressive, and how that expression endures the infinitude of its own becoming by producing form that is folded. And in Bacon we saw the affect that, created on the plane of composition and therefore in abstraction, erupts as a violent and horrific sensation that working against the human dissolves form, and returns the face to the nonhuman close-up—the head.

Deleuze insists that the dissolution of form into the indefinite zone of "any-space-whatever" is not a move or passage from one lived state to another. The other world that arises in the work of art is far more radical than that. The sensations that art produces go beyond the lived and, correspondingly, beyond the economy of representation. Ahab not imitating the whale but becoming-whale, Mrs. Dalloway becoming-imperceptible, Penthesilea, Queen of the Amazons, becoming-bitch are all examples of a decentring that dissolves the distance of subject–object relations with its perceptions and affections, and which instead works in a zone of indetermination or indiscernibility where things or the individual—*Montagne Sainte-Victoire* or George Dyer—are always becoming and "endlessly reach that point that immediately precedes their natural differentiation" (Deleuze and Guattari 1991: 169, 173). In

painting, that zone of indetermination is the plane of composition, a common zone in which one cannot distinguish animal from human, head from face, flesh from bone, but out of which arises an appearance that embodies and preserves the vibration of its own becoming and indetermination, thus giving a 'life', 'body' or, as Deleuze and Guattari suggest in *What is Philosophy?*, a 'universe' (1991: 177). Hence Bacon's double method of distortion and record, and the parallel duality of Deleuze and Guattari's statement that "the peculiarity of art is to pass through the finite in order to rediscover, to restore the infinite" (197).

What we saw in Bacon was the dissolution of form that returned the face to a point *before* its differentiation (Deleuze's differenciation) as a significant construct, a move from the actual to the virtual, and to the face as close-up or head. As the close-up, the face is an indefinite composition of pinks, blues and whites, strokes and marks, a diagram that preserves the multiplicity of the face *before* it is specified as a human and lived actualization. As such it is imperceptible from the point of view of a socially produced representational construct. That return to the plane of composition gives the face an existence in "any-space-whatever", which is a zone of indetermination where the definition of the face dissolves into the head. But, while certainly not actual the face that is imperceptible is not, strictly speaking, a virtual, if by virtual we understand the chaotic pre-human "virtually visible" of the virtual–actual circuit, as for instance theorized by Merleau-Ponty. Wrest from the virtual–actual circuit to stand on its own, this virtual exists as an entity on the plane of composition, and is a quite different virtual from the amorphous pre-human depth. Preserved in the material, on the canvas, this virtual eludes actualization and keeps the infinite movement of its reality as an Event in play. It is pure affect or pure percept, and a nonhuman becoming.

# CONCLUSION

As I suggested in my last chapter, Bacon records a portrait that captures the violence of that reality because he works from the suggestion of the diagram, and creates portraits that are consistent with the multiplicity of their becoming, so restoring the infinite to the faces of his subjects; George Dyer, Isabel Rawsthorne or Lucien Freud, for example. Bacon's portraits are therefore not shocking because they present an unpalatable truth or horror, but because they hit us with new, unfamiliar nonhuman sensations—the face as it never was, is or will be lived, the face whose expression is produced in the machinic relations of the diagram and not as a representational construct. Bacon thus gives an existence to a new non-propositional reality of man.

We first encountered the 'hit' of the pure sensation in the rhythms of the *Boogie Woogie* in Mondrian's grids, where the punctuality of the coordinating axis explodes into the vibrant pulsation of colour-blocks. It was here too that I first explained abstraction in painting as painting which returns to its own methods, and by means of its own material creates sensations that remain indifferent to actualization: when indeed the artist 'thinks in painting'. I associated the strange dislocated spaces produced by this move to abstraction with the depth of the visible sought by Cézanne in his own acknowledgement of the power of colour as "colouring sensation" [*sensation colorante*], and with the "virtually visible" identified by Merleau-Ponty in his 'Eye and Mind' essay (1961). However, while Merleau-Ponty is concerned with the task of revealing the invisible, I saw the more radical move to the virtual that exists independently of the actual in Cézanne's late watercolours. This is the virtual that Deleuze and Guattari identify in the work of art, which they define as "a being of sensation and nothing else" (Deleuze and Guattari 1991: 164). Art preserves sensation.

I followed that task of preservation through the work of Pollock, Klee and Bacon. As Pollock's work so aptly demonstrates the

explosion into abstraction works within a quite different order of painting to representation. As Deleuze explains in *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (1993a), in abstraction "the surface stops being a window on the world and now becomes an opaque grid of information on which the ciphered line is written" (1993a: 27). Instead of the hand being subordinate to the eye, and therefore to form as seen and as lived, the eye is made subordinate to the hand and to the work of paint. So in Pollock's "all-over" canvases, for example, action painting produces a grid of information and the "ciphered line" that holds for a surface and which maintains its own curious spatiality—(*n–1*) dimensionality (27).

This resolute move to abstraction and to the work of paint takes my interest in painting beyond a concern with the possibility of revealing the visible by demonstrating the multiplicity of a virtual masked by actualization, as in Cézanne's work on planes of colour, such as *Montagne Sainte-Victoire* 1885–87 (fig. 2.1). In contrast to this concern with actualization, what I find in Pollock is painting which deals only with what it can create with its own methods, by means of the material. What it produces is a different virtual to the one revealed as the invisible to actualization, as in Merleau-Ponty's model. It is a virtual that is *made* or rendered visible. It creates, by its own means, a virtual that has become consistent and become an entity without surrendering its status as abstraction. In *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari call that virtual the Event because it is a virtual "that eludes its own actualization" (1991: 156). How does it do this? By keeping the infinite movement of virtuality in play, and so maintaining its character as a multiplicity. As is demonstrated in Pollock, there is no beginning or end, just the infinite movement of becoming. What I went on to argue is that the movement of the virtual is not a chaos that requires the order of actualization to become an entity and to enter an

ontology of being, but a quite different virtual that has its own order as becoming.

I explored the order of becoming in my chapter on Klee, showing how the abstract line emerges from the labyrinthine folds and the movement of the differential relation. This is the line of inflection, the abstract line that holds for a surface. What Deleuze is quick to point out, and what is evident in Klee's work, is that "abstraction is not the negation of form: it posits form as folded" (1993: 35). Thus we see in Klee the strange emergent forms or images produced by "taking a walk with a line" and seen in the "feverish line of variation" that is caught in a *matter* of expression, as in the wild spiralling of *Angelus Novus* 1920 (fig. 5.2) and the twisted contortion of *Pursed-lipped Lady* 1930 (fig. 5.7) (Deleuze and Guattari 1980: 499).

Klee proposes *Gestaltung* as a creative figuration that works "over against form", but what is clear from the 'ardent flowering' of his art is that new forms arise, forms which are indeed folded and which emerge in duration (1956: 17). These forms retain their integrity as abstraction—thus working over against the exteriorized theory of form *Formlehre*—because they are realized in the material, material which has itself become expressive. The form is made visible by means of the material, making visible 'Sail-boats in gentle motion' or 'Ardent flowering', not as a representational resemblance (perception and affection), but as pure "colouring sensation" (percept and affect). Klee thus "renders visible" the radical abstraction of pure sensation and demonstrates that, far from negating form, 'thinking in painting' produces the expressive resemblance that refers to its own material. It is therefore a curiously nonhuman resemblance [*ressemblance sensible*] because it is never lived and has no human reference. It remains acentred.

# CONCLUSION

The importance of Bacon in this study is to take that nonhuman resemblance—the resemblance that can only be understood in terms of its composition and genesis—and to incorporate or embody that Event in the portrait and thus to give it an existence as the nonhuman becoming *of man*. This embodiment has a peculiar status because, while the Event becomes an entity by being preserved in the material, which itself becomes expressive, it does not lose the movement and vibration of the process of becoming. In other words, the reality of the Event is given a body without being actualized and brought within human perception and affection.

We have then a body that is becoming rather than being, and which thus stands *before* man as the nonhuman becoming of man. In Deleuze's own work on Bacon the embodiment (and recording) of the sensation produced in distortion is denoted by the capitalized 'Figure' in order to distinguish it from the figuration characteristic of the order of representation, and to signify the Figure as an entity that embodies the virtual Event. Figure is therefore a non-linguistic concept, one produced within the practice of painting.

As we saw in the last chapter, like Pollock before him, Bacon is concerned to keep that practice pure, and in order to do so subordinates the eye to the hand. He starts with the throw of paint, and it is that chance painterly configuration that is brought to the portrait, so that when he saves the contour it is a contour that arises within the material. It is an abstract line that is extended and drawn into the portrait—a depth brought to the surface. What is important is that, because Bacon 'thinks in paint' that contour is created by its own means and maintains its character as an impersonal and singular Event

of painting that stands on its own. The Figure is then an impersonal, singular embodiment: a body, a life.[1]

Echoing his work on Bacon and the notion of the contour as a membrane [*membrane*] that assures communication between the Figure and the material structure, and which isolates, distorts, and ultimately dissolves form, in *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* Deleuze argues that abstraction is not the negation of form, but a dissolution of form that returns the Figure to its composition and to its structure as matter in movement where expression refers only to the manner of its folding and not to any exterior image. As in Klee, the virtual is realized in form that is folded, and stands on its own "without image".

In *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze introduces the aesthetic category of "the possible", in order to conceptualize a body (a life or a universe) that is neither virtual nor actual (1991: 177). Remembering the lesson of the cinema books where, in his preface to the English edition (1992), Deleuze makes it clear that he is not writing a history or theory of the cinema but isolating certain cinematographic concepts, and the images and signs that it invents, I understand "the possible" as a concept produced within art practice (1983: ix–x). Deleuze and Guattari talk about "possibles" in the context of Proust, and suggests a "Rembrandt-universe" and a "Debussy-universe" as possibles that give a body and expression to sensory becoming (1991: 177). The possible is therefore an aesthetic category that belongs to the work of art: the

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1 In the discussion on Dickens in his last published article 'Immanence: A Life …' (1995), which I mentioned in the last chapter, Deleuze makes the distinction between the point between 'his life and death' and the moment when the individual life gives way to 'a life'. 'A life' is impersonal and singular and releases a pure event freed from subjectivity and objectivity, and from 'what happens'. It is a "singular essence". See: 1995: 5–7.

novel and music as well and painting. "The possible" is a body that is consistent with the plane of composition and that celebrates the Event. It does not only make visible that reality but gives it a body and a life—makes it possible. By not moving to actualization that body remains has a reality as "the existence of the possible" and confides to the ear of the future the sensations that it invents (177). Hence, Deleuze and Guattari's correlation between the affect and the nonhuman becoming of man (169).

Because "the possible" is an entity preserved in the work of art Deleuze and Guattari call that work a monument (1991: 167–68, 176–77). The monument does not actualize the Event but gives it a body. It does not depend on or evoke memory, or refer to the human. The monument refers only to the virtual conjunctions of its composition, and embodies the Event of that becoming. It is thus a celebration of that Event:

> Here the monument is not something celebrating a past, it is a bloc of present sensations that owe their preservation only to themselves and that provide the event with the compound that celebrates it. (Deleuze and Guattari 1991: 167–68)

If we accept this definition, the paintings that I have explored in this thesis can rightly be termed monuments. Each provides the Event with the compound that celebrates it. Mondrian's tight grids open onto dazzling spaces of indeterminate depth and the non-pulsed abstract line. Pollock's action painting creates an explosive and catastrophic dance in which rhythm and pattern are operative, and where the material itself becomes expressive and preserves the vibrations of the Event. In Klee the endless journey is a line that is always in the process of becoming, an endurance that carries the multiplicity of the 'grey'

point into the line on a walk. That multiplicity is captured in the colour of Bacon's diagram, that chance throw of paint that is the suggestion for Bacon's Figures. The portraits—George Dyer, Isabel Rawsthorne, Lucien Freud, Bacon himself—do not move from that virtuality to a distinct actualization that fixes the face or the figure as lived but, resisting that representation as identity, work in the opposite direction. They break through the standard face and, by preserving the virtual multiplicity of the Event in the radiant compound of splashes and marks that is the diagram, celebrate man's nonhuman becoming. There is a new reality that is screaming in paint. In these portraits that possibility is preserved in a monumental materiality, a monument not of the past but which celebrates the future. When the artist makes the leap from representation to abstraction and 'thinks in painting' the diagram of that possible is made and a new order of space–time and form mapped out. The creative capacity of painting is thus to demonstrate new possibilities of existence and to show how we might "think without image".

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